YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

STORY AND ART BY SHIN MASHIBA

3

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THE WALL

YUMEKUI KENBUN

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR

CONTENTS

The Fourteenth Night... Continuance 003

The Fifteenth Night... Voice 031

The Sixteenth Night... The Wall (Part One) 063

The Seventeenth Night... The Wall (Part Two) 091

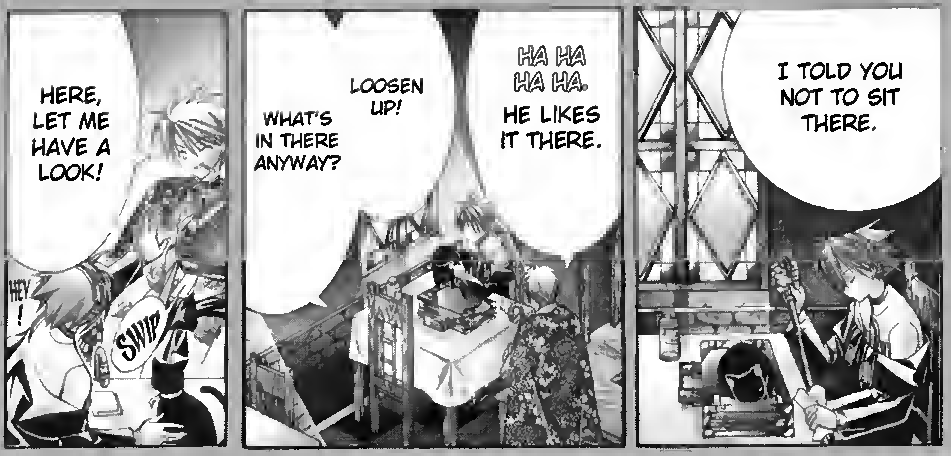
The Eighteenth Night... Writing 119

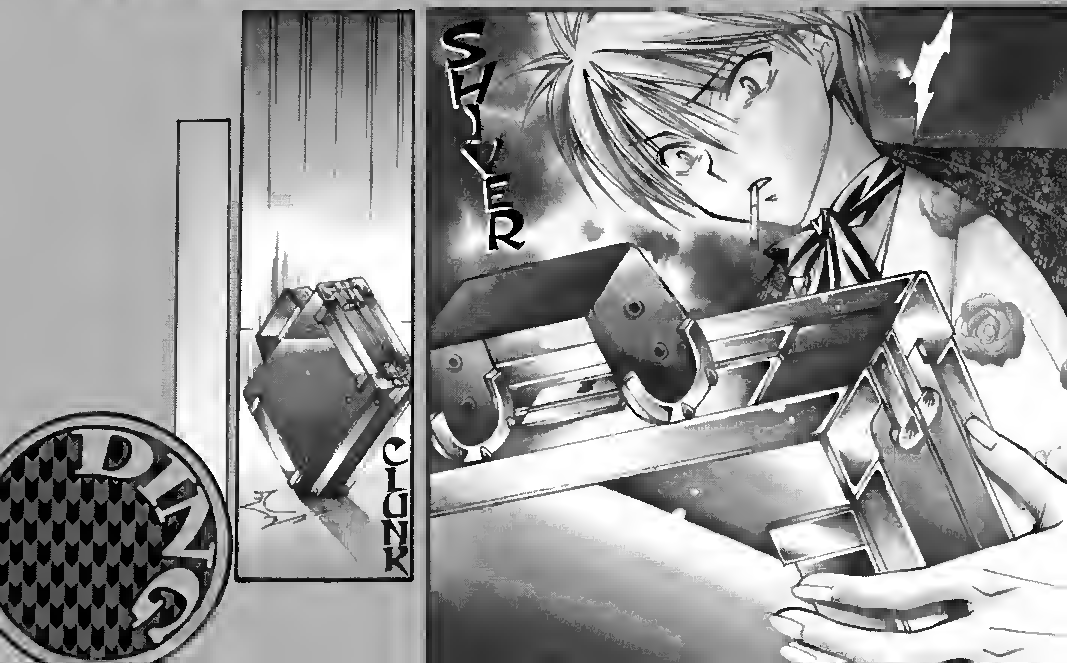
The Nineteenth Night... Masks 143

The Nineteenth 1/2 Night... Silver Star Tea House 169

Afterword... 177

UNDER COVER OF DARK-NESS
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE
NAAMU...
...SEEKING SOLACE


HERE, LET ME HAVE A LOOK!
HEY!
SWIP
WHAT'S IN THERE ANYWAY?
LOOSEN UP!
HA HA HA HA.
HE LIKES IT THERE.
I TOLD YOU NOT TO SIT THERE.


CLUNK
SHIVER

The Fourteenth Night: Continuance

SUPER POPULAR! GREAT ROMANTIC HOWAH...

SHIN MASHIBA's friend, Wan Wan Shiroi.

Hey again! Volume 3 already? Wow, congratulations!
I'm not sure if I'm a guest or just a space filler. This is my third time now!
I have a feeling that the readers are going to start asking who the heck I am.

But considering I was asked to be here, what's going on?! Isn't this usually a leftover page? I'm getting shafted here! Was there ever a guest treated like this in the past?! This is outrageous! I have a feeling that my relationship with Mashiba may suffer a rift. So anyway, here I am again. Look forward to it!

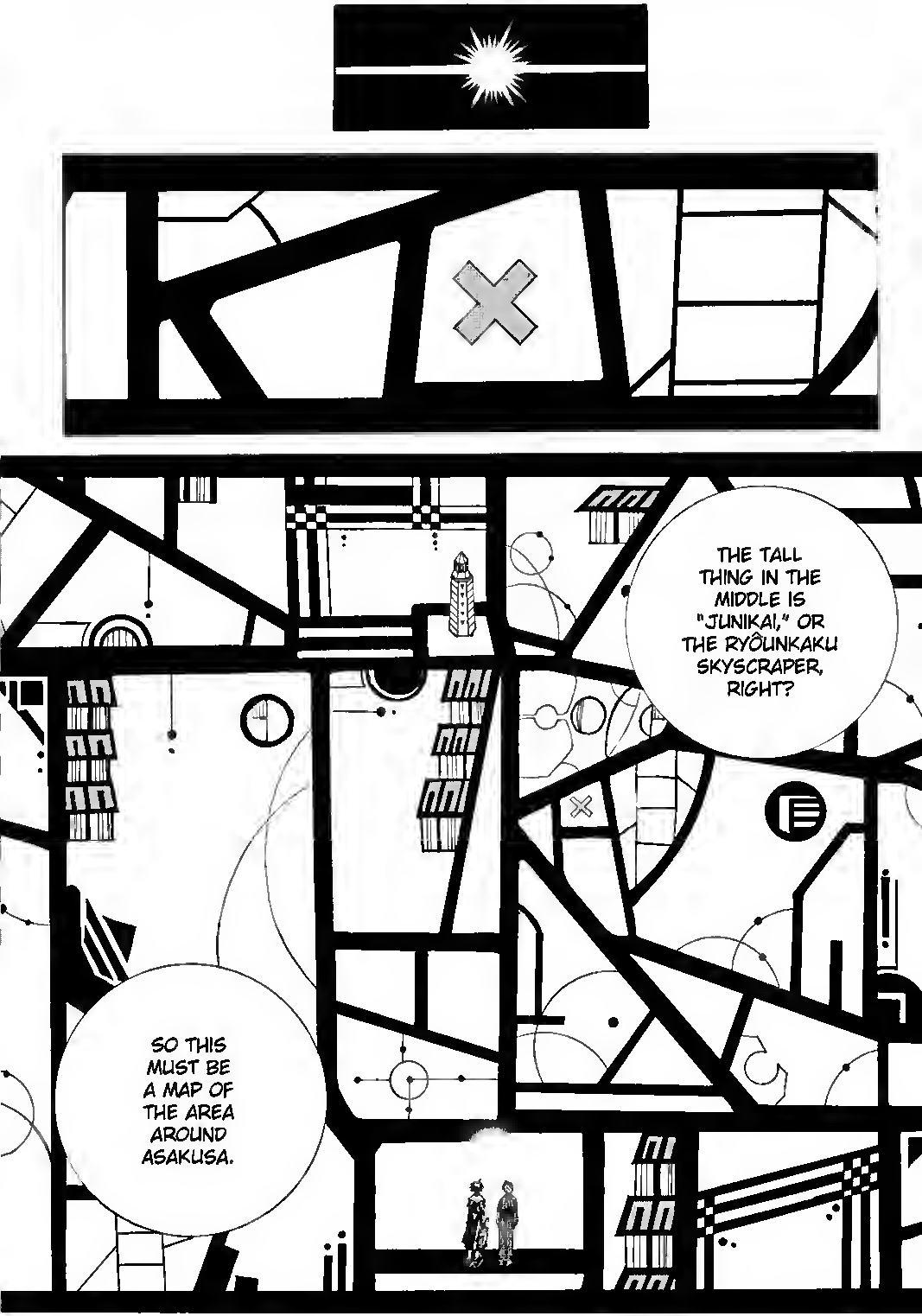
IS THIS WHERE I CAN FIND HIRUKO THE BAKU?
SNEAK
IS IT ABOUT A NIGHTMARE? COME IN.
?
W-WHY DID THAT SUITCASE GIVE ME THE CHILLS?
You're so sensitive
MEOW
AND IT WAS REALLY LIGHT.
NGH
WHAT ON EARTH IS IN IT...?!

SO?
I've never had coffee before.
DON'T WORRY. IT'S ON THE HOUSE.
I DIDN'T ORDER ANY COFFEE.
CLINK
YES.
ENDS?
I'M NOBU AIBA. I WANT YOU TO SHOW ME HOW MY DREAM ENDS.
THERE'S AN "X" MARKED ON IT, BUT EVERY TIME I'M ABOUT TO REACH IT, I WAKE UP.
FOR SEVERAL YEARS I'VE BEEN HAVING THIS STRANGE DREAM THAT LOOKS LIKE A MAP.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO GO TO THE X MARK?
WELL ...
I STARTED HAVING THE DREAM RIGHT AFTER...
...MY LITTLE SISTER, MIYOKO, DISAPPEARED, ALONG WITH PART OF MY MEMORY.
BUT RIGHT WHEN I'M ABOUT TO REMEMBER SOMETHING, THE DREAM ENDS...
Ahh...
I HAVE NO OTHER RELATIVES. MIYOKO WAS EVERYTHING TO ME.
SO YOU THINK THAT BY REACHING THE X MARK IT WILL TRIGGER SOMETHING TO BRING THEM BACK?
YOUR SISTER *AND* YOUR MEMORY?!

SO I'M BEGGING YOU, HIRUKO! SHOW ME THE REST OF MY DREAM!
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT IS AT THE X MARK.
IT'S POINTLESS.
HUH?
BUT ... I'LL DO IT.
I WANT TO SEE YOUR EXPRESSION WHEN YOU WAKE UP.
I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.
FOOSH

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.


THE TALL THING IN THE MIDDLE IS "JUNIKAI," OR THE RYÔUNKAKU SKYSCRAPER, RIGHT?
SO THIS MUST BE A MAP OF THE AREA AROUND ASAKUSA.

PLEASE MAKE SURE I DON'T WAKE UP.
LET'S HEAD FOR THE X MARK.
I ALWAYS WAKE UP AROUND HERE.
JUST A LITTLE FURTHER.
GULP
LET'S GO.
TMP

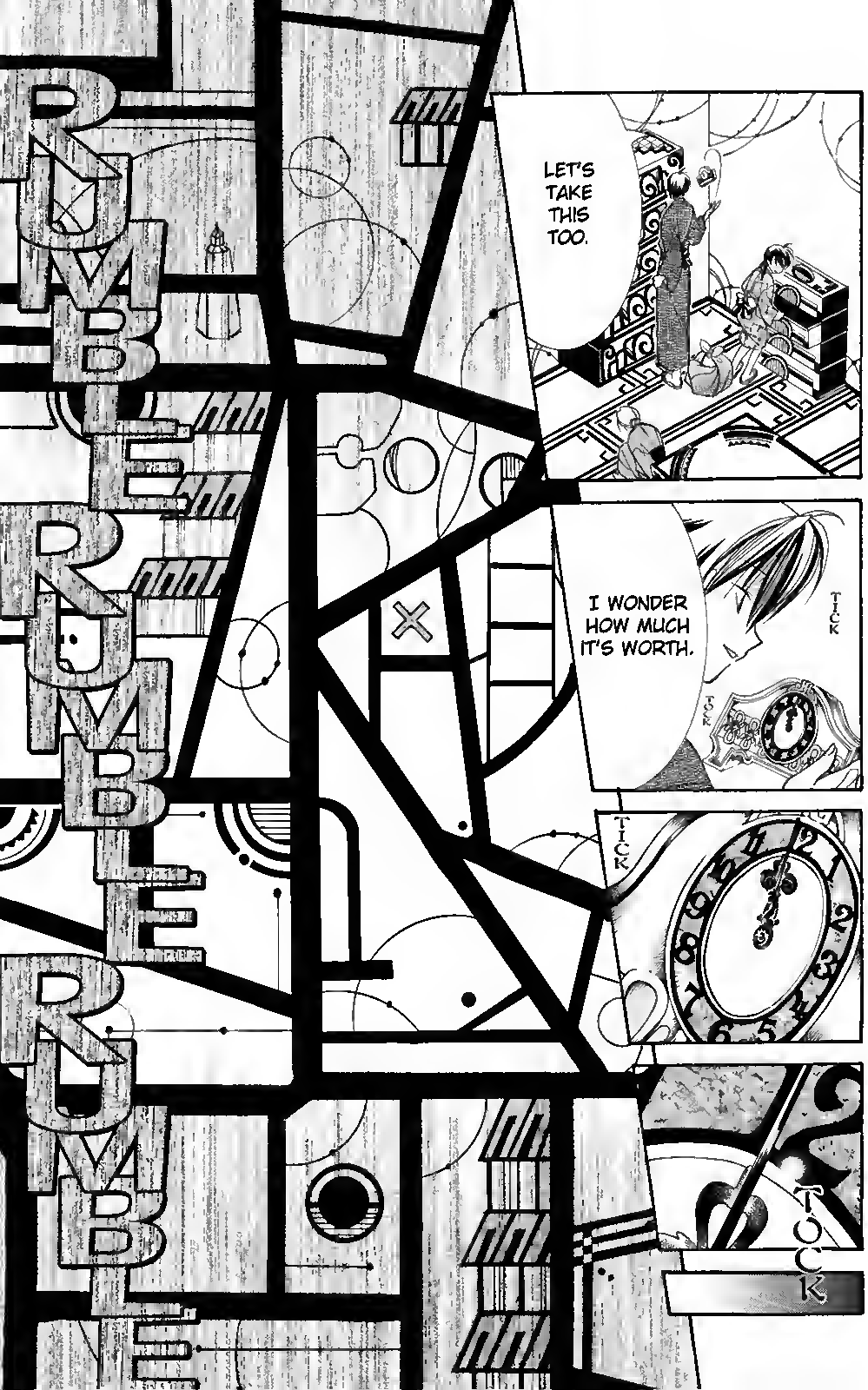
WHO'S THAT?
MIYOKO!
HIRUKO, IT'S MIYOKO! SHE'S HERE!
SQUEEEE
THIS IS ALL THANKS TO—
MFF
BROTHER.
MIYOKO!

?!
WHY ARE YOU YELLING?
THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT WE DECIDED TO ROB, RIGHT?! YOU HAVE THE ESCAPE ROUTE ALL PLANNED OUT, DON'T YOU?!
ROB?!
HURRY UP. IT'S THIS HOUSE, RIGHT?
HUH?
THE MAP IN THE DREAM IS AN ESCAPE ROUTE...?
DO YOU WANT TO LOSE OUR DINNER?!
HEH HEH
Oh boy.
HURRY! BEFORE THE OWNER GETS BACK.

RUSTLE
RUSTLE
LOTS OF VALUABLES HERE.
SEPTEMBER
1
1923
1
...

HEH HEH.
THIS IS WHERE THEY'VE STASHED IT.
HEH HEH... THIS IS GREAT.
HEY, AIBA!
...MONEY. MONEY!
WH- WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
DRAT! SOMEONE'S STILL HOME!
SWISH

FOOM
SWIK
YANK
BEHAVE YOURSELF, OLD WOMAN.
PAT
PAT
HA HA HA!
I SEE YOU'RE BACK TO YOUR OLD SELF!


LET'S TAKE THIS TOO.
I WONDER HOW MUCH IT'S WORTH.
TICK
TICK
TICK
TOCK

RUMBLE
WAAAH! WHAT'S GOING ON?!
RUMBLE
I-IT'S A HUGE E-EARTH-QUAKE!
RUMBLE
WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE! IT'S DANGEROUS!
WAIT!
MIYOKO?
RUMBLE
I DON'T WANT TO BE A MURDERER TOO!

CRACK
THIS SCENE ...
!
NO! LEAVE HER!
RUMBLE
RUMBLE

MIYOKO!
MIYOKO!
H-HELP...
BRO...THER..
BRO..
SAUR

ZOOOOOOOO!!

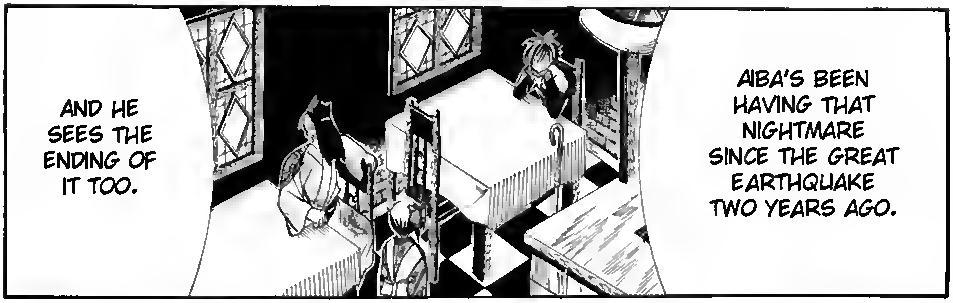
SO... IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS.
BUT ...
YOU'RE NOT THE BAKU I KNEW THEN...

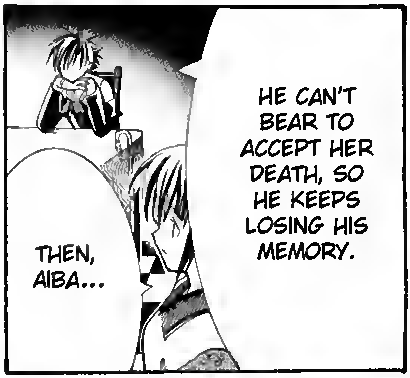
THIS DREAM IS YOUR MEMORY TRYING TO RESURFACE.
THAT EARTHQUAKE WAS THE BIG ONE THAT HAPPENED TWO YEARS AGO ON THE FIRST OF SEPTEMBER.
※GREAT KANTO EARTHQUAKE OF 1923
HEY ...
AND ...

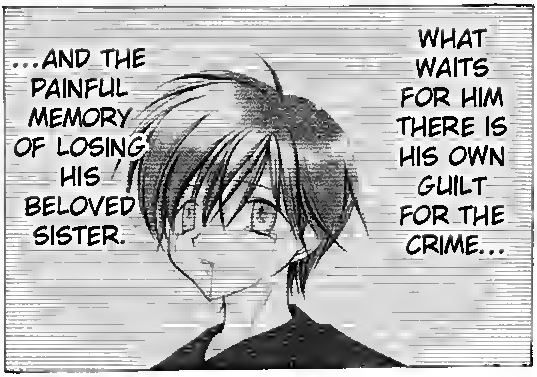
WHERE'S ...
... MIYOKO?
THE SHOCK ...
...
...OF LOSING YOUR LITTLE SISTER ERASED YOUR MEMORIES.
TIME TO WAKE UP.

I DIDN'T GET TO SEE THE REST OF MY DREAM.
WE DIDN'T MAKE IT TO THE X MARK AFTER ALL...
TOO BAD ...
IT WAS FOOLISH TO EXPECT A BAKU TO HELP...
I'M DISAPPOINTED.
I WON'T COME BACK.
OH, MIYOKO ...
WHERE ARE YOU, MIYOKO...?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHAT WAS AT THE X MARK?!
OH, I SHOWED HIM.
YOU COULDN'T SHOW HIM HOW IT ENDED?
That's unusual.
HUH?
THEN WHY DON'T WE GO TO THE REAL PLACE AND DIG? THERE MIGHT BE MONEY BURIED THERE!
MONEY?! OOH, JUST LIKE A TREASURE MAP!
MONEY... AND...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT, HIRUKO?
?
AND MONEY ISN'T THE ONLY THING THAT'S BURIED THERE...
I HAVE NO INTEREST. BESIDES, THAT AREA WOULD HAVE CHANGED BY NOW.


AND HE SEES THE ENDING OF IT TOO.
AIBA'S BEEN HAVING THAT NIGHTMARE SINCE THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE TWO YEARS AGO.


THEN, AIBA...
HE CAN'T BEAR TO ACCEPT HER DEATH, SO HE KEEPS LOSING HIS MEMORY.

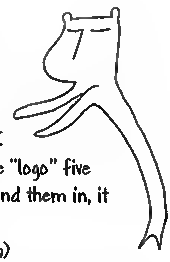

...AND THE PAINFUL MEMORY OF LOSING HIS BELOVED SISTER.
WHAT WAITS FOR HIM THERE IS HIS OWN GUILT FOR THE CRIME...

AS HE CONTINUES TO LOOK FOR HIS DEAD SISTER...
YES. HE'LL KEEP HAVING THE SAME NIGHTMARE.

THAT'S THE PRICE HE HAS TO PAY.

The Fifteenth Night: Voice

I really like this logo. What do you think? It looks like a sign for an Ear, Nose and Throat Clinic.



It's a play on the original logo.
I wish the magazine would use it at least once, because I think it's really fun. If the magazine readers would write "logo" five times in the margins of the readers' survey cards and send them in, it just might work. (laugh)
Please! There's strength in numbers! ***Please, help!*** *(laugh)*

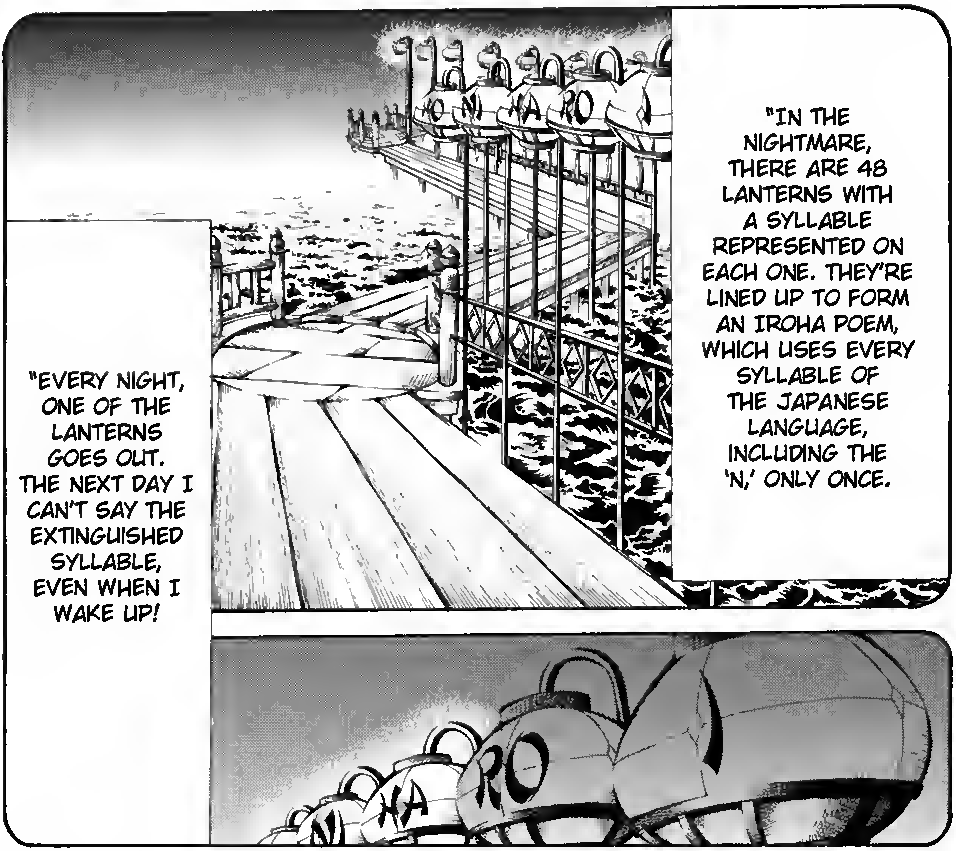
I drew the logo on a mouse pad with a marker and gave it to Mashiba as a present, but the ink faded after only six months. It was so sad! If it looks like this at six months, I wonder what it will look like in three years! Probably really ripe!

DOESN'T IT LOOK STRANGE, HIRUKO?
HA HA HA HA !
UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS ...
SEEKING SOLACE
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE ...
HOW DARE YOU!
AND WHAT KIND OF FATHER LEAVES HIS FOOLISH SON TO HIS OWN DEVICES?!
YOU HAVE WAY TOO MUCH TIME AND MONEY ...
I love how it ignores its true function!
YOU CAN PICK UP SOME INTERESTING WARES AND INFORMATION.
YOU SHOULD TRY GOING OUT DURING THE DAY.
It's really cool!
MIZUKI, TAKE A LOOK AT THIS!
FINE THEN!
NOW I WON'T SHOW YOU MY FAVORITE PIECE!
MY, WHAT A BR*GHT, CHEERFUL SHOP.
DING

IS THIS THE INFAMOUS SILVER STA* TEA HOUSE?
IS HI**KO THE **KU HERE?
COULD HE BE THIS HANDSOME GENTLEMAN?
I'M HIRUKO, THE BAKU ...
OH, YOU ...
YOU SEEM LIKE A FRIENDLY SORT.
THE TH*NG IS...
YOU'RE HAVING A NIGHTMARE, AREN'T YOU?
AND THAT'S WHY YOU'RE MISSING PARTS OF YOUR WORDS WHEN YOU SPEAK?
YOU LOOK VERY TENSE. BUT DON'T WORRY.

LIP READING
I'LL READ YOUR LIPS AND SOUND OUT THE WORDS FOR YOU.
SIR, YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPEAK ALOUD. JUST MOVE YOUR LIPS AS IF YOU WERE SPEAKING NORMALLY.
PLEASE SIT DOWN.
HERE YOU ARE.
BUT HIRUKO, HOW CAN YOU HELP IF YOU CAN'T MAKE OUT WHAT HE'S SAYING?
IT'S FINE.
"I SEE... LET'S TRY THAT."
MM!!
MMM
CUP
CUP
!

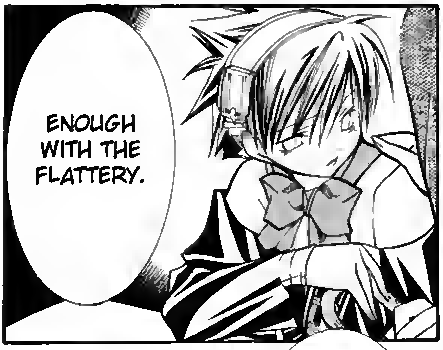
"MY NAME IS OTOMITSU TSUZURA. I'M A NARRATOR FOR MOVING PICTURES AT THE ASAKUSA THEATRE."
※AT THE TIME, MOST FILMS WERE COMPLETELY SILENT, SO NARRATORS WOULD SOUND OUT THE DIALOGUE AND EXPLAIN THE MOVIES TO THE AUDIENCE.
WE ONCE HAD A CUSTOMER WHO WAS HAVING A NIGHTMARE ABOUT THE FILM THE LONG NIGHT OF DARKNESS.
"REALLY? I WAS THE NARRATOR ON THAT FILM."
Oh my!
Maybe he's the lead narrator!
"BUT I'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT THIS JOB WASN'T RIGHT FOR ME.
"I DON'T KNOW WHY THOUGH..."
HMM..
IT MUST BE A BIG PROBLEM IF A NARRATOR CAN'T SPEAK.
"TH-THAT'S EXACTLY IT!
"IF IT KEEPS UP, I'LL LOSE MY JOB!
"AND ALL BECAUSE OF THAT NIGHTMARE!"


"EVERY NIGHT, ONE OF THE LANTERNS GOES OUT. THE NEXT DAY I CAN'T SAY THE EXTINGUISHED SYLLABLE, EVEN WHEN I WAKE UP!
"IN THE NIGHTMARE, THERE ARE 48 LANTERNS WITH A SYLLABLE REPRESENTED ON EACH ONE. THEY'RE LINED UP TO FORM AN IROHA POEM, WHICH USES EVERY SYLLABLE OF THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE, INCLUDING THE 'N,' ONLY ONCE.
NI HA RO
NI HA RO

"SOMEONE MUST BE PUTTING OUT THE LANTERNS! HIRUKO, PLEASE HELP ME CAPTURE HIM!"
IF I END UP LOSING THE ABILITY TO SPEAK, WHAT WILL I DO?!
TREMBLE
TREMBLE

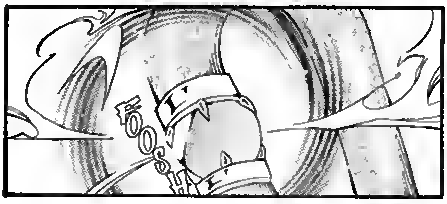
"PLEASE.
"I BELIEVE IN YOU.

...I CAN'T DO THAT.

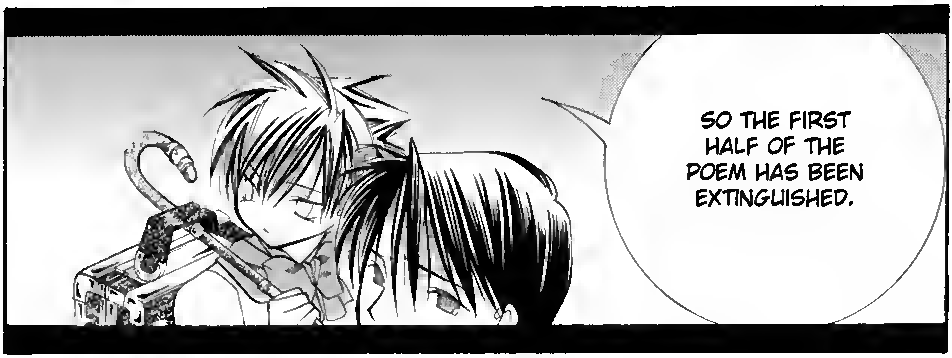

ENOUGH WITH THE FLATTERY.

"I KNEW THE MOMENT I SAW YOU.
"THAT YOU HAVE AMAZING INSIGHT.
"THAT YOUR COMPASSION AND SENSE OF JUSTICE WOULD NEVER LET YOU ABANDON SOMEONE IN NEED."
WHAT IS THIS GUY MAKING ME SAY...

FINE, I'LL HELP GET YOUR VOICE BACK.



SLEEP NOW...
LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.


SO THE FIRST HALF OF THE POEM HAS BEEN EXTINGUISHED.

KA
YO
"WHO'S DOING THIS?! SHOW YOURSELF!!"
RE
TA
BOO
"OH! ANOTHER ONE!
UGH!
YO
...
BUT WE NEED TO GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS...
WHY NOT JUST RELIGHT THE EXTINGUISHED LANTERNS?
FWIK
YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW. YOU WANT ME TO FIND THE CULPRIT.
BUT MR. TSUZURA...
RATHER THAN TRYING TO CHASE HIM DOWN...

KA!
I SAID IT! I CAN SAY IT!
NOW, CAN YOU SAY "KA"?
I'M GOING TO RELIGHT THE "KA" LANTERN.
SO LET'S RELIGHT ALL THE OTHERS.
WA
WO
RU
NU
RI
CHI
TO
HO
HE
I'M SAVED. NOW I'LL BE ABLE TO WORK.
YES... ALL THE LOST LETTERS ARE COMING BACK.
THANK GOODNESS
THANK

I DON'T GET IT.
WHY WOULD I HAVE THIS NIGHTMARE IN THE FIRST PLACE...
YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD. EVEN THOUGH THE WORDS CAME BACK.
IS THIS WHAT I REALLY WANTED?
I DON'T KNOW... I FEEL UNEASY...
BUT WHY DO I FEEL LIKE THIS ...
MR. TSUZURA, WHY DID YOU BECOME A NARRATOR?
WHY ARE YOU ASKING ME THAT?
BECAUSE I USED TO BE TONGUE-TIED.
TO OVERCOME MY WEAKNESS, I PRACTICED PUBLIC SPEAKING ...
...WHICH LEAD TO MY CAREER AS A NARRATOR.
BUT ...
PEOPLE MADE FUN OF ME... BULLIED ME...
IT CAUSED A LOT OF MISUNDER-STANDINGS.
...I MEAN, I'D ALWAYS BEEN SHY, UNABLE TO SAY WHAT I TRULY MEANT.

WHAT DID I REALLY BECOME?

MUTE!
THEY WEREN'T MY WORDS.
"If that is
our wish...
I will follow..."
IT WAS BECAUSE THE WORDS WERE ALREADY WRITTEN FOR ME.
NO MATTER HOW WELL I WAS ABLE TO SAY THE DIALOGUE OR THE EXPLAIN THE SCENES...

ALL I WANTED THEN WAS THE COURAGE TO SAY WHAT I REALLY THOUGHT.

THE THINGS I SAY JUST COVER UP HOW I REALLY FEEL AND THINK.
I WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO SPEAK UP FOR MYSELF.
IF THE WORDS ARE PREPARED LIKE SCRIPTS, I CAN RELAX. BUT WHEN THEY'RE TAKEN AWAY, I CAN'T EVEN SPEAK.
BUT I NEVER REALLY CHANGED.

OH... WHY AM I SO SMALL AND WEAK?!
IT'S SO FRUS-TRATING!
AND IF...
IF I CAN'T SAY WHAT I FEEL...
EVEN NOW MY TRUE FEELINGS ARE LOCKED IN MY HEART.
THEN MAYBE I SHOULD SAY NOTH-ING!
SO THAT'S WHY THE WORDS DIS-APPEARED IN THIS NIGHTMARE ...!
GASP
MR. TSUZURA, I THINK YOU'VE REALIZED BY NOW THAT YOU WERE THE CULPRIT EXTIN-GUISHING THE LANTERNS.
AND NOW THAT YOUR VOICE IS BACK, YOU'RE UNSURE OF WHAT TO DO AND ARE FEELING UNEASY AGAIN... AM I RIGHT?
HE'S RIGHT. PERHAPS I'M NOT SUITED TO...
...BEING A PROFESSIONAL NARRATOR...
NO WONDER I'VE ALWAYS FELT AT ODDS...

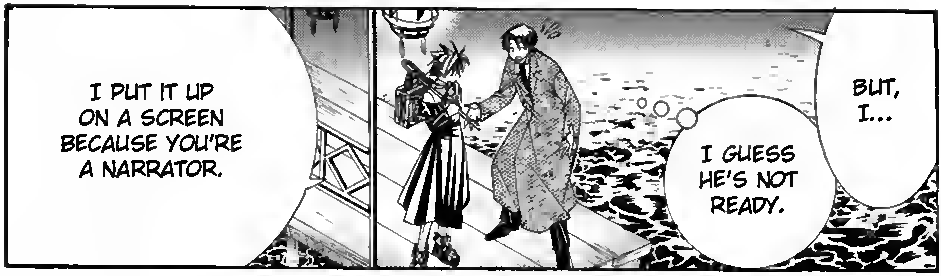
I REMEMBER AFTER A SCREENING OF THE LONG NIGHT OF DARKNESS...
A REALLY PASSIONATE CUSTOMER CAME UP TO ME AND SAID...
HEY! AREN'T YOU THE NARRATOR OF THIS PICTURE?!
SWIP
THEN, YOU GOTTA DO SOMETHING FOR ME!
A REQUEST?
Was he hiding?
THE FILM WAS ABOUT TWO LOVERS WHOSE MARRIAGE WAS FROWNED UPON BY SOCIETY.
THEY ELOPED AND FELL TO THEIR DEATHS FROM THE TOP OF A WATERFALL AT THE END.
I WORSHIP THE ACTRESS BENIBANA. AND I CAN'T STAND A STORY WHERE SHE COMMITS SUICIDE!
IT'S BEEN GIVING ME TERRIBLE NIGHTMARES.
SO I WANT YOU TO CHANGE THE ENDING
CHANGE THE ENDING?
I can't do that.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
HEH HEH! SOMETHING ONLY YOU CAN DO— CHANGE THEIR LINES.

Listen!
AT THE CLIMAX, BENIBANA SAYS...
"DON'T LET GO OF MY HAND."
AND HER LOVER KAYAMA ACQUIESCES TO HER SUICIDAL PACT...
"IF THAT IS YOUR WISH, I WILL FOLLOW YOU EVEN TO DEATH."
NOW, THAT LINE...
I WANT YOU TO CHANGE IT TO MY WORDS!
"YOU CAN'T DIE. YOU MUST LIVE ON, NO MATTER WHAT."
OF COURSE I REFUSED. IT'S MY JOB.
Right.
BUT I REALLY SYMPA-THIZED WITH HIM.
MY WORDS ...
IF ONLY I COULD SAY WHAT'S REALLY ON MY MIND...
I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN AFTER THAT...
HE WAS A CUSTOMER OF MINE.
WHAT?

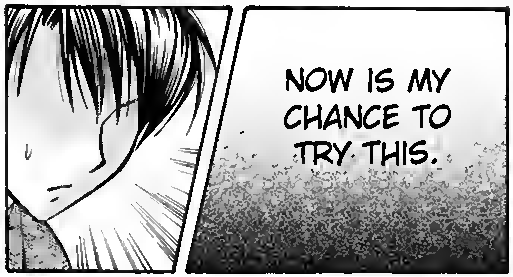
IN HIS DREAM HE FINALLY STOPPED HER FROM COMMITTING SUICIDE, AND SHE ACCEPTED HIS LOVE.
HE HAD A NIGHTMARE... WHERE HE KEPT REPLAYING BENIBANA'S FINAL SCENE IN THE LONG NIGHT OF DARKNESS.
HIS NAME WAS TOMEO KAGESA.
IT SEEMED THAT SHE HAD ASKED ALL THE MEN WHO FELL FOR HER TO MAKE A SUICIDE PACT...
Yes.
HMPH!
...BUT AFTERWARDS, IT BECAME KNOWN THAT BENIBANA HAD SUICIDAL TENDENCIES.
Do you recall?
I COULDN'T FORGIVE A WOMAN LIKE THAT.
IT MADE ME FURIOUS!
SO, MR. TSUZURA.
Heh heh... He's gotten quiet.
THE NIGHTMARES STARTED AGAIN SO HE CAME BACK.
KAGESA WAS DRAWN IN WITHOUT REALIZING HOW DEEPLY HE LOVED HER.

IT'S TRUE THAT THE MOMENT I STARTED LOSING MY SPEECH, I FELT FEAR.
I FELT SO DESPERATE KNOWING I COULDN'T EXPRESS MYSELF WITH WORDS.
HOW-EVER ...
I'VE RELIT ALL THE LANTERNS NOW...
BUT YOU'LL COME BACK FOR MORE HELP AT THIS RATE.
I'M STILL BAFFLED.
HE'S RIGHT.
SO MAYBE THIS IS MY OPPOR-TUNITY TO FINALLY DO IT...
BUT I HAVE THEM ALL BACK NOW.
TO HAVE THE COURAGE TO SPEAK MY MIND!

THIS WAS PART OF KAGESA'S NIGHTMARE.
ALL THE DREAMS I COLLECT ARE ENGRAVED IN MY BODY. IT'S EASY FOR ME TO REPLAY THEM.
WHY DON'T YOU TRY SPEAKING?
THERE MUST BE SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SAY.
USE YOUR OWN WORDS, LIKE KAGESA. SPEAK TO BENIBANA MAKINO.


I PUT IT UP ON A SCREEN BECAUSE YOU'RE A NARRATOR.
BUT, I...
I GUESS HE'S NOT READY.

IT SHOULD BE A LITTLE EASIER FOR YOU NOW.
VOICEOVERS ARE YOUR SPECIALTY, RIGHT? JUST DO WHAT YOU NORMALLY DO AND PRETEND YOU'RE KAYAMA.


NOW IS MY CHANCE TO TRY THIS.

HE MAY BE RIGHT.
I- I SEE.

"DON'T LET GO OF MY HAND."
I'LL SAY IT!
WHAT I WANTED TO SAY WHEN I FOUND OUT BENIBANA'S TRUE NATURE!

"NO, YOU SELFISH WOMAN! WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SUICIDE PACT?! HOW DARE YOU TOY WITH PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS!
"IF YOU WANT TO DIE, DO IT ALONE!"
I SAID IT!
I FINALLY SAID WHAT I REALLY THOUGHT!
HA HA! IT WAS EXHILA-RATING!
IT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER FELT THIS WAY!

IT'S LIKE ALL THE UNEASE IN MY HEART HAS BEEN WASHED CLEAN!
WAS THAT REALLY MY OWN VOICE?! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
AMAZING!
HOW WAS IT?
I WAS SPEAKING ONLY AS KAYAMA, BUT IT FELT SO EASY.
...BUT IF I HAD REALLY SAID THAT TO SOMEONE, HOW WOULD THEY FEEL?
I'M GLAD THIS WAS IN A DREAM ...
...
IS THIS WHO I REALLY AM...?
I ONLY NOTICED IT WHEN I SAID THEM OUT LOUD, BUT...
WHAT HARSH WORDS!

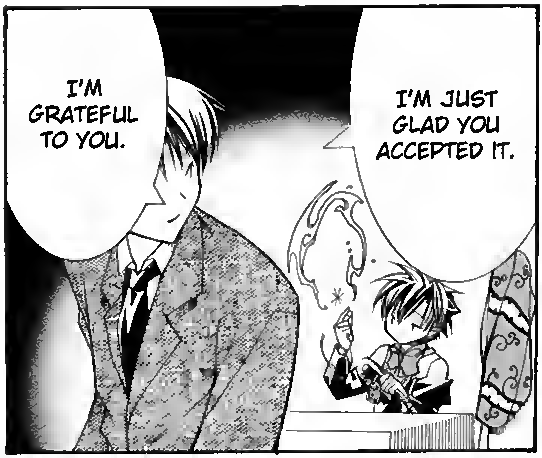
I COULD NEVER SAY SOME-THING THAT WOULD HURT ANOTHER.
I COULDN'T TAKE THAT.
I WOULD BE AFRAID OF REBUTTAL OR REVENGE.
I COULD NEVER SAY THOSE WORDS TO A REAL PERSON...
I GUESS I SHOULD BE CONTENT WITH MY LOT.
YES, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO USE THIS VOICE TO BE A GOOD NARRATOR SO FAR!
YES, I'M ALL RIGHT AS I AM.
BY READING THE LINES ELOQUENTLY I'VE BEEN ABLE TO ENTERTAIN SO MANY PEOPLE.
"If that is
our wish,
I will follow..."

SO AS LONG AS YOU CAN SAY THE WORDS, EVEN IF YOU DON'T AGREE, YOU'RE FINE WITH THAT?
YES... THAT'S RIGHT.

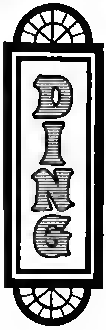
I CAN MAKE THE WORDS COME TO LIFE.

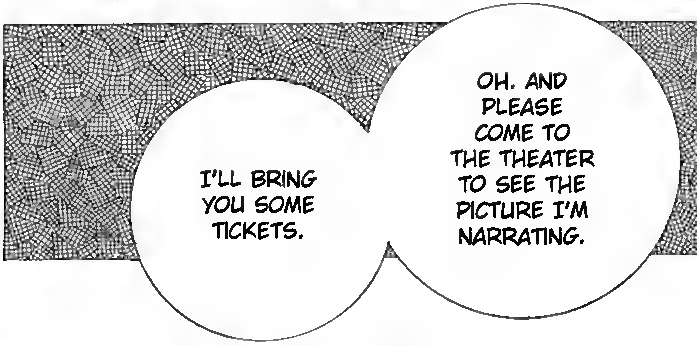
THEN LET'S LEAVE THIS NIGHT-MARE.
TIME TO WAKE UP.
FLOOSH

I CAN'T TAKE THIS MUCH MONEY.
THIS IS HOW MUCH MY VOICE AND THE CONFIDENCE I'VE GAINED IN MYSELF ARE WORTH!
BECAUSE OF YOU I CAN GO ON NARRATING.
PLEASE TAKE IT!
It's the nightmare I want.
BESIDES, I HAVE NO INTEREST IN SUCH THINGS.
PLEASE DON'T CHEAPEN THAT.
HE'S PERSISTENT.
THEN TAKE THIS IN RETURN.
OH, BUT THAT'S HIFUMI'S ...
BUT IT REALLY IS A LOT.
I GUESS I HAVE TO TAKE IT...


I'M GRATEFUL TO YOU.
I'M JUST GLAD YOU ACCEPTED IT.

HA HA ...
WHAT IS THIS?
Who knows?


DING

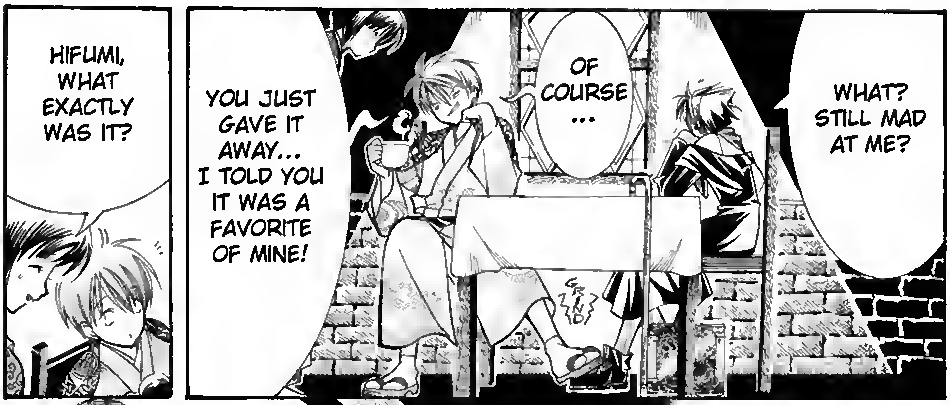

See you!
I'LL BRING YOU SOME TICKETS.
OH. AND PLEASE COME TO THE THEATER TO SEE THE PICTURE I'M NARRATING.

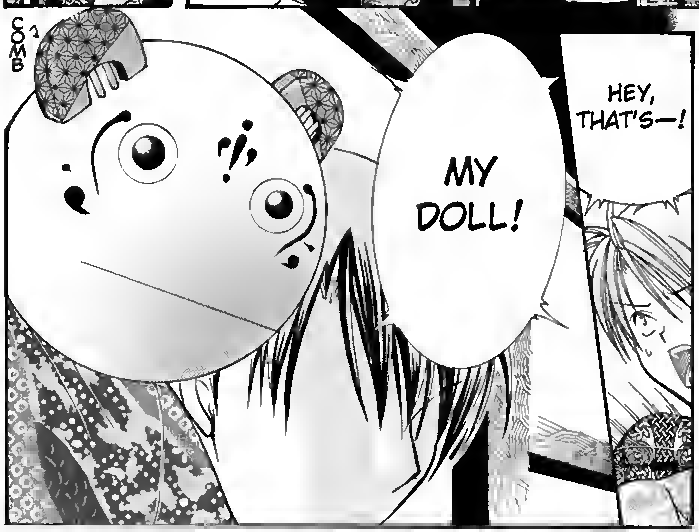
HE REALLY WANTED TO CAST ASIDE HIS DOUBTS.
I DON'T THINK HE'S...

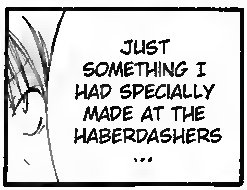
HE WAS KIND OF PUSHY.

IT TASTES MURKY...

A FEW DAYS LATER

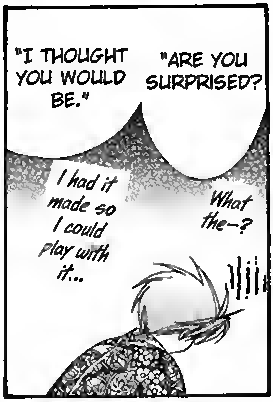


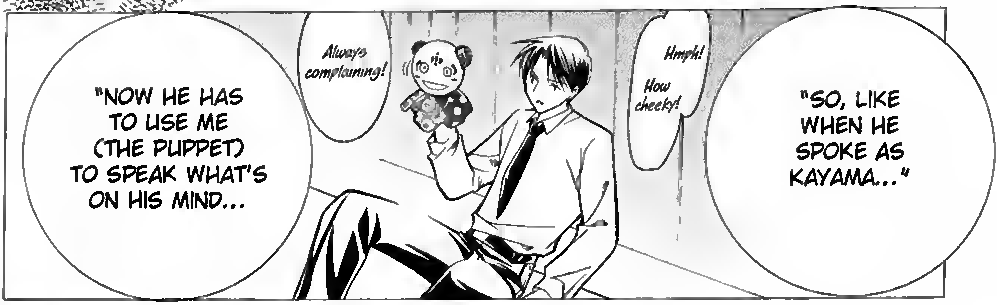


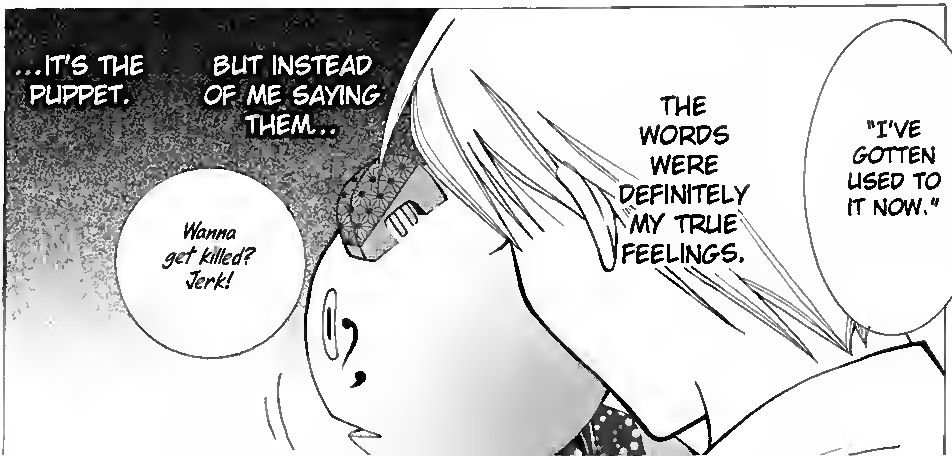


"WHAT ARE YOU DOING? MORON!
Didn't he call me handsome before?
?!
"HEY, WHAT'RE YOU LOOKING AT?!
"IT'S THE PUPPET WHO'S TALKING!"

"HE COULDN'T GET OVER THE EXHILARATION OF EXPRESSING HIS TRUE FEELINGS IN THE NIGHTMARE.



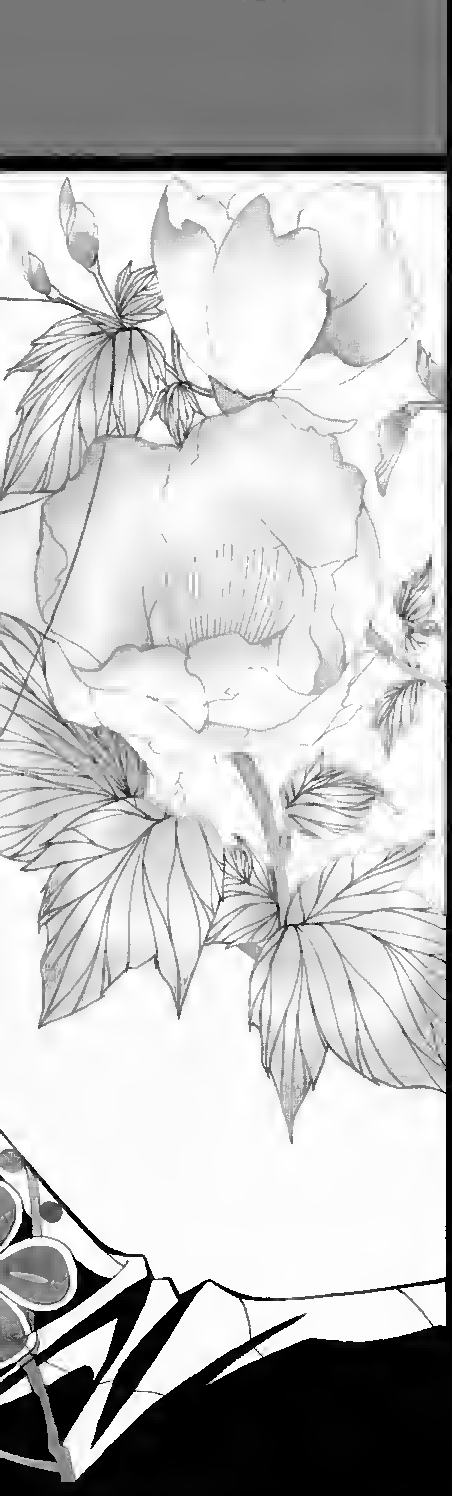

"NOW HE HAS TO USE ME (THE PUPPET) TO SPEAK WHAT'S ON HIS MIND...
Always complaining!
Hmph! How cheeky!
"SO, LIKE WHEN HE SPOKE AS KAYAMA..."


...IT'S THE PUPPET.
BUT INSTEAD OF ME SAYING THEM...
Wanna get killed? Jerk!
THE WORDS WERE DEFINITELY MY TRUE FEELINGS.
"I'VE GOTTEN USED TO IT NOW."

IT WAS KAYAMA!
"NO, YOU SELFISH WOMAN! WHAT DO YOU MEAN, SUICIDE PACT?! HOW DARE YOU TOY WITH PEOPLE'S EMOTIONS!"
BUT I REALIZED THAT IT WASN'T REALLY ME SAYING THOSE THINGS TO BENIBANA ON THE SCREEN.
IT WASN'T ME.
IT HAD NOTHING WHATSOEVER TO DO WITH ME.
"NOW HE CAN'T SPEAK AT ALL WITHOUT ME."
"WHAT A PATHETIC EXCUSE! SINCE HE CAN NO LONGER KEEP HIS TRUE FEELINGS HIDDEN, HE USES ME WHEN HE CAN'T USE KAYAMA.
SO YOU'RE AFRAID OF THIS DOLL THAT'S SPEAKING YOUR MIND, IS THAT IT?
AND NOW YOU CAN'T RESTRAIN YOUR OWN VOICE...

THERE'S NO WAY HE CAN BE A NARRATOR
...
...DON'T BOTHER GIVING US TICKETS.
"HA HA! THIS IS FUN FUN FUN! TALKING HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY SPECIALTY."
"THERE'S ALSO NO REASON TO STAY HERE ANY LONGER.
!
"OH, THAT'S SO TRUE.
BWA HA HA HA HA
That was what he really thought of you?!
Oh, he probably didn't mean it.
"SEE YOU LATER, SHORTY!"
DING

AH, THAT'S GREAT. NOW YOU'RE ONE STEP CLOSER TO DEATH...
DOOR
SEEKING SOLACE...
UNDER COVER OF DARK-NESS...
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE
I DON'T KNOW.
FINE! THEN ON YOUR BIRTHDAY, I'M GOING TO FILL THIS SHOP WITH STINKY CHAMELEON PLANTS!
WHEN IS IT? TELL ME!
THIS IS HOW YOU CONGRA-TULATE ME ON MY BIRTH-DAY?!
GRIND
GRIND
Umph, figures! You probably don't even care about such things anyway.
...
!



The Sixteenth Night: The Wall (Part One)

DO YOU REALLY NOT KNOW THE DAY YOU WERE BORN...?

WAN WAN SHIROI'S CONTEST ~Comedy Quiz~

Send your answers to Mashiba! Be creative! The one that makes me laugh the most will get a Formalin plastic board autographed by Mashiba and me. (Limited to one winner.)

written in marker

Q1: The Silver Star Tea House's delicious coffee has a secret ingredient. What ingredient is used to give it that special flavor? (For instance, seaweed.)

Q2: It is well known that Hifumi's cat, Naamu, doesn't like him. What three things in particular does he hate about Hifumi?

Q3: Hifumi is well known for his couture. What's the one thing he wouldn't wear unless he was dying?

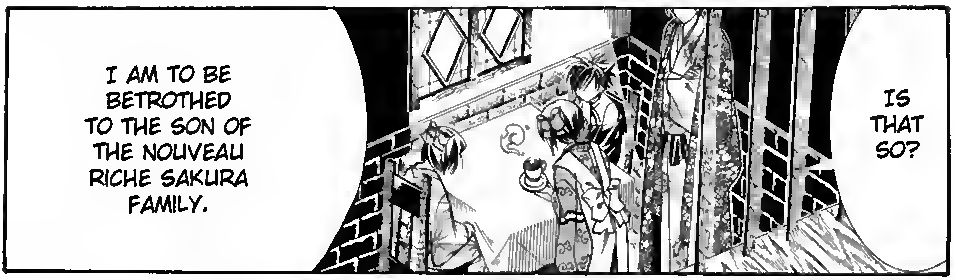
Q4: There's a seat in the Silver Star Tea House that no one wants to sit in. Why is that?

Q5: The Silver Star Tea House has a bell on the door that makes a "ding" sound when someone enters. But it's not really a bell. What is it?

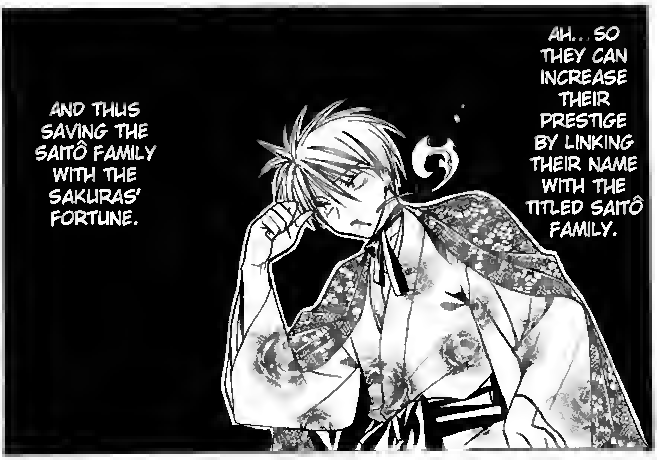
Continued on PAGE 144...

EXCUSE ME.
IS THIS WHERE HIRUKO THE BAKU WORKS?
YES, THIS WAY, PLEASE.
MY NAME IS KASUGA SAITÔ.
SAITÔ?
COULD IT BE...?
HEY HIRUKO, BE CAREFUL HOW YOU SPEAK TO HER.
SHE COULD BE ONE OF THE POWERFUL, ARISTOCRATIC SAITÔ FAMILY.

WHAT IS *THAT*?
...THEN YOU MUST HAVE HEARD ABOUT *THAT* TOO?
DO YOU KNOW OF ME?
THE THING IS...
MY FATHER INVESTED OUR FAMILY FORTUNE IN AN EXPLORATION FOR PRECIOUS MINERALS IN MANCHURIA WITHOUT ANY SUCCESS.
MY FAMILY IS IN FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES...

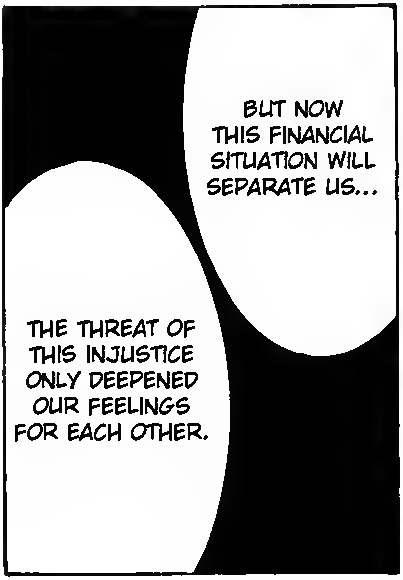

I AM TO BE BETROTHED TO THE SON OF THE NOUVEAU RICHE SAKURA FAMILY.
IS THAT SO?

BUT I... I...
MY FATHER IS ALREADY IN TALKS.

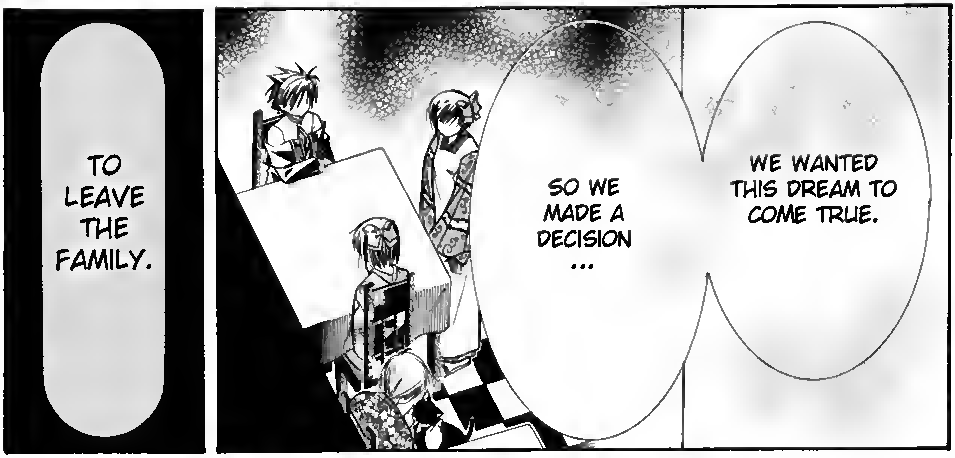

AND THUS SAVING THE SAITÔ FAMILY WITH THE SAKURAS' FORTUNE.
AH.. SO THEY CAN INCREASE THEIR PRESTIGE BY LINKING THEIR NAME WITH THE TITLED SAITÔ FAMILY.

I CANNOT AGREE TO THAT!
MY HEART BELONGS TO ANOTHER!

※STUDENT HOUSEBOYS LIVED AND WORKED IN SOMEONE'S HOUSE WHILE RECEIVING THEIR EDUCATION.


BUT NOW THIS FINANCIAL SITUATION WILL SEPARATE US...
THE THREAT OF THIS INJUSTICE ONLY DEEPENED OUR FEELINGS FOR EACH OTHER.

IT'S PEACEFUL AND NOTHING COMES BETWEEN US...
WE'RE TOGETHER IN THE WOODS BEHIND THE MANSION, JUST CONTENT TO BE WITH EACH OTHER.


TO LEAVE THE FAMILY.
SO WE MADE A DECISION ...
WE WANTED THIS DREAM TO COME TRUE.

WE MET IN THE WOODS AND PLANNED TO FLEE.
OH MY! AN ELOPEMENT?!

IT WAS RAINING THAT DAY.
BUT ...
HIYAMA STUMBLED IN THE MUD...
...AND WAS CAUGHT BY MY FAMILY WHO WERE CHASING US.
FATHER HAD BEEN KEEPING A CLOSE EYE ON US.
I WAS TAKEN BACK TO THE MANSION.
...AND SEPARATED FROM HIYAMA.

BUT MY DESIRE TO SEE HIM ONLY GREW,
AND I STARTED DREAMING AGAIN...

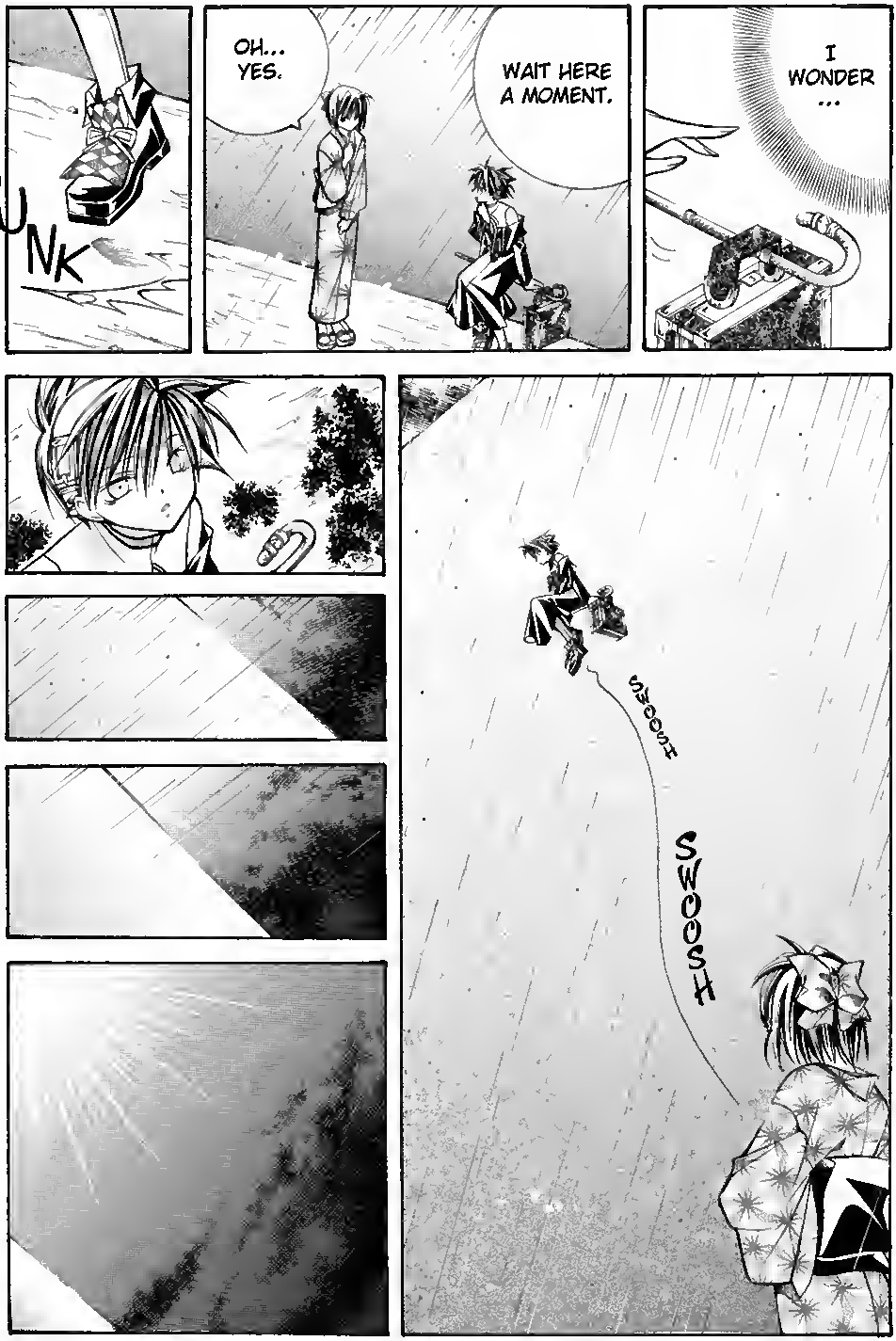
YES... THE DREAM IS NOW ABOUT THE DAY WE ELOPED.
AND HAS SOMETHING CHANGED IN THE DREAM?
HOW TERRIBLE.
AND A LARGE WALL THAT I'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE HAS APPEARED.
BUT FOR SOME REASON HE NEVER COMES.

COULD HIYAMA BE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WALL?
I THINK SO, BUT THE WALL IS SO HIGH.
I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE!
I WANT TO SEE HIM AGAIN, IF ONLY IN A DREAM.
PLEASE, HIRUKO! TAKE DOWN THAT WALL!
SAVE ME FROM THIS NIGHTMARE!
A WALL ...
INTERESTING.
HEH
HEH
WELL, LET'S TAKE A LOOK.
ぐっ

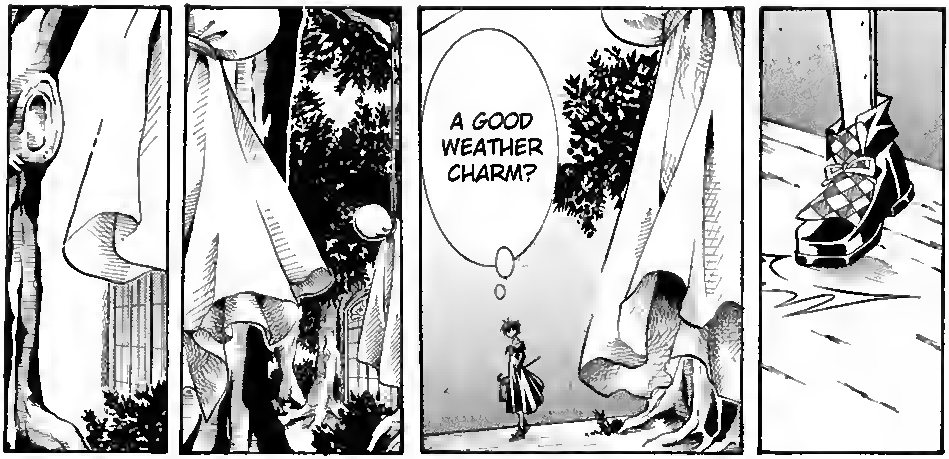
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

THE DAY OF THE ELOPE-MENT...
RAIN ...
AND THIS IS THE WALL.

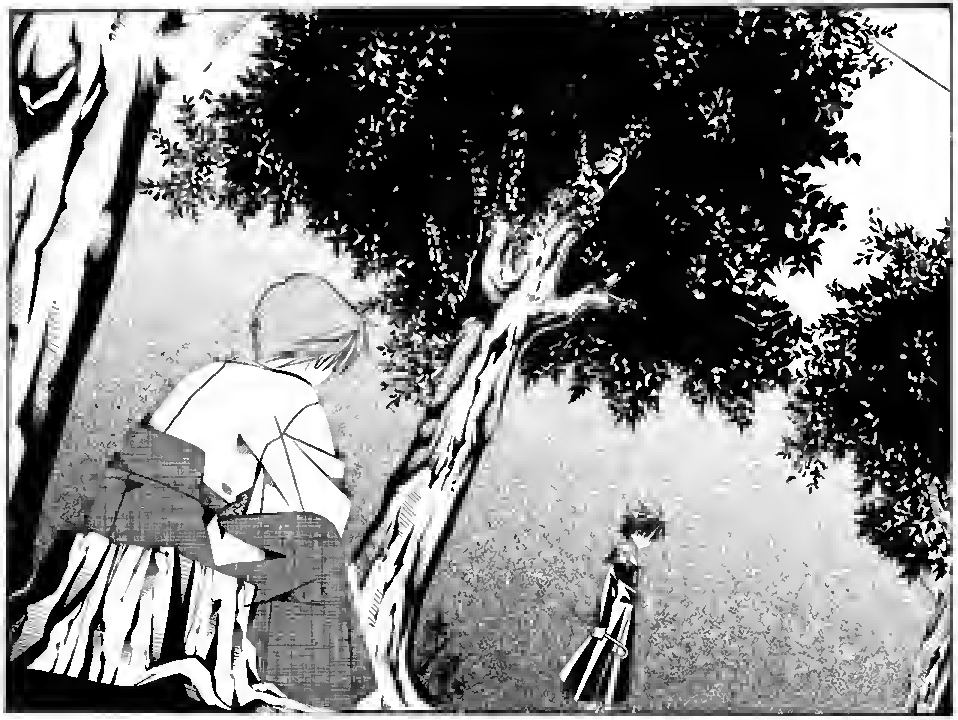
KASUGA, IF THIS WALL IS AN OBSTACLE BETWEEN YOU TWO...
I THINK WE'LL NEED TO UNDERSTAND WHY IT HAS APPEARED BEFORE WE CAN REUNITE YOU.
PERHAPS IF WE CAN FIGURE THAT OUT, THE WALL WILL DISAPPEAR.
ARE YOU SAYING THAT THERE HAS BEEN A RIFT IN HIYAMA'S AND MY FEELINGS?


THUNK
OH... YES.
WAIT HERE A MOMENT.
I WONDER ...
THOOSH
SWOOSH

YES, IT IS.
THE SUN IS SHINING ON THIS SIDE.
WHY ON EARTH?
WHAT IS THAT...?

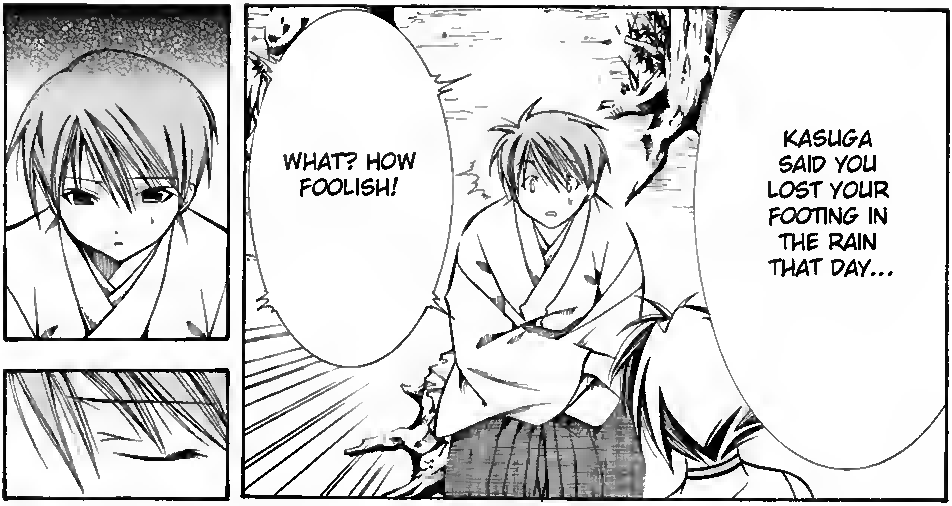

A GOOD WEATHER CHARM?

WHO ARE YOU?

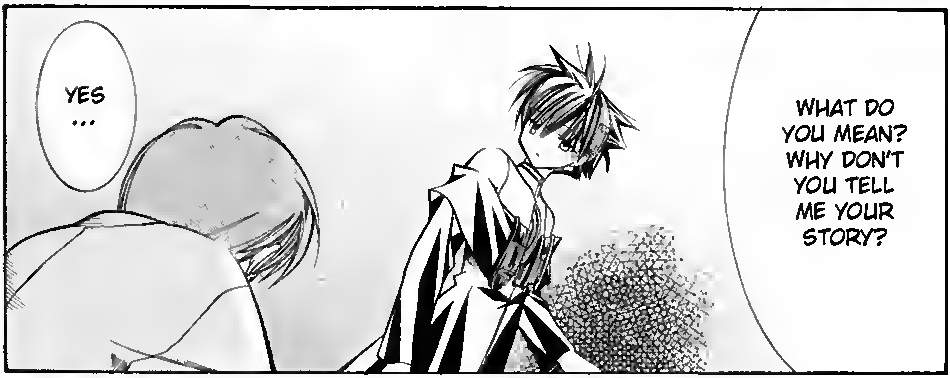


I'M A BAKU CALLED HIRUKO. KASUGA ASKED ME TO ENTER THIS DREAM...
I'M SHINOBU HIYAMA.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY YOU'RE HERE... BUT THAT MEANS SHE IS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS WALL.
MISS KASUGA ...
AHH... IF ONLY THIS WALL WASN'T HERE...

!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN? IT *WAS* SUNNY THAT DAY.
?
THIS IS STRANGE... IF THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE THE DAY YOU ELOPED, WHY IS IT SUNNY OVER HERE?
THAT *IS* STRANGE. IT WAS VERY SUNNY THAT DAY. HOW COULD SHE THINK OTHERWISE?
DOES MISS KASUGA THINK THAT IT WAS RAINING THAT DAY?
PLEASE DON'T LAUGH. I THOUGHT THE BIGGER IT WAS, THE MORE EFFECTIVE IT WOULD BE.
I EVEN HUNG UP A GOOD WEATHER CHARM FOR LUCK.
...


KASUGA SAID YOU LOST YOUR FOOTING IN THE RAIN THAT DAY...
WHAT? HOW FOOLISH!

NO, I WAS THE FOOL...
I LET GO OF HER HAND...


WHAT DO YOU MEAN? WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME YOUR STORY?
YES ...

WE MANAGED TO LOSE OUR PURSUERS AND ESCAPE.
WE CAME TO A RIVER AND STARTED TO CROSS IT...
BUT I WAS SWEPT AWAY BY THE CURRENTS AND LET GO OF HER HAND.
LUCKILY, SHE WAS SWEPT BACK TO SHORE.
BUT SHE WAS CAUGHT BY THE MEN WHO HAD BEEN CHASING US...

I'M SORRY, MISS KASUGA.
I COULDN'T PROTECT YOU...
I CAN NEVER GO BACK NOW.
I DON'T BLAME HER FOR CHANGING THE STORY.
THEIR STORIES DON'T MATCH.
UNLESS WE FIGURE OUT WHY, THIS WALL WON'T DISAPPEAR..
...

WHICH...

...IS CORRECT?

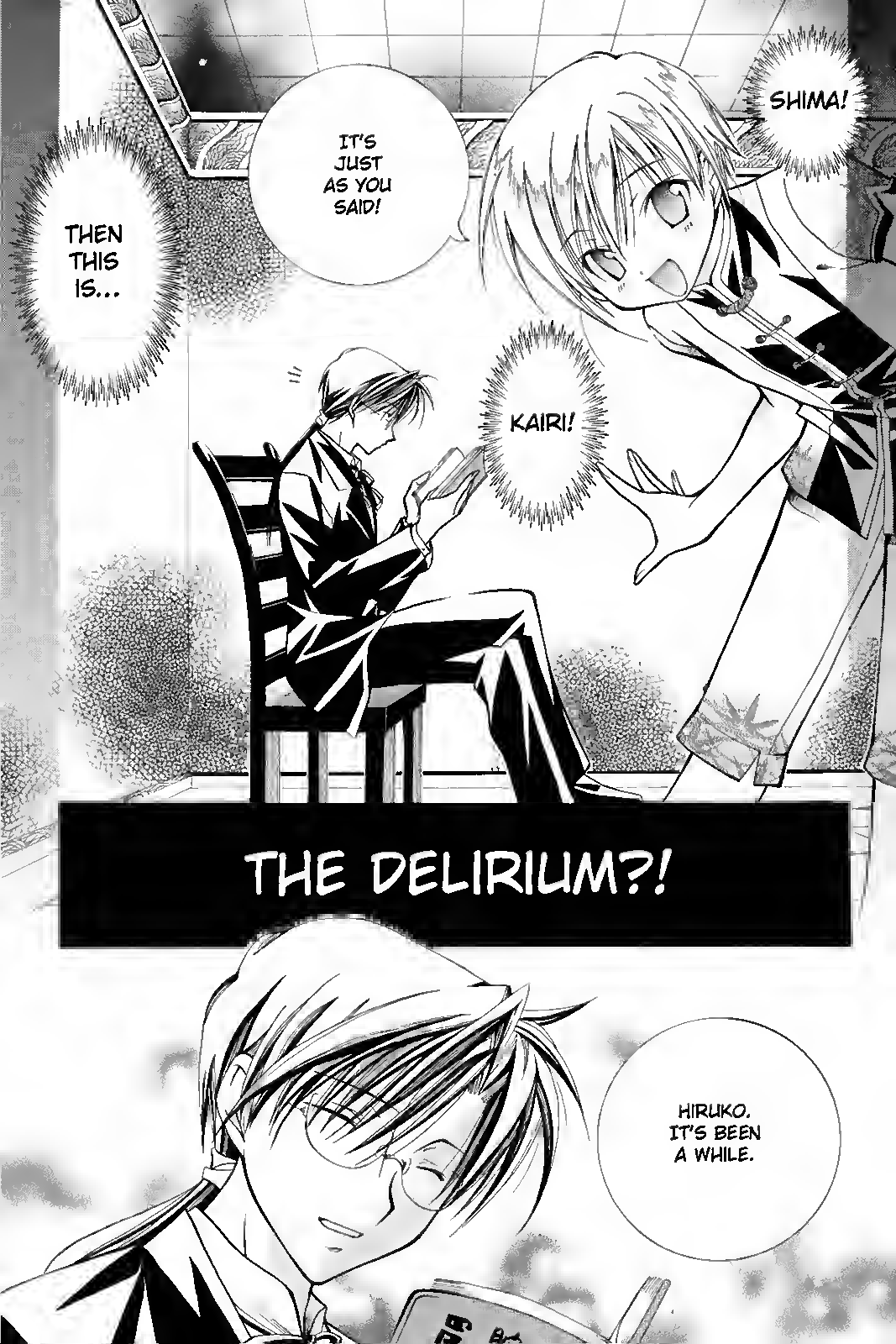
WHICH...

BUT HIYAMA SAYS IT WAS SUNNY AND THEY HAD MANAGED AT ONE POINT TO GET AWAY.

...IS CORRECT?

HMM, THAT DOOR...
THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO GET TO THE TRUTH...

IT CAN'T BE...!
CREAK
OOH! YOU WERE RIGHT!
HE REALLY DID COME!


SHIMA!
IT'S JUST AS YOU SAID!
THEN THIS IS...
KAIRI!
THE DELIRIUM?!
HIRUKO. IT'S BEEN A WHILE.

The Seventeenth Night: The Wall (Part Two)

I FOUND HIYAMA A FEW DAYS AGO WHEN I WAS OUT ON A WALK.
SO I CARRIED HIM BACK TO THE DELIRIUM.
CARRIED...?

THOUGH I DON'T LIKE TO SPEAK OF MY VISITORS' PRIVATE MATTERS.

...
SO HE'S IN A ROOM?
YES.
DO YOU WANT TO HEAR WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?

FWIP
HIYAMA.

NOT ONLY IS THIS KASUGA'S NIGHTMARE ...
IT'S ALSO A ROOM AT THE DELIRIUM.
THIS ROOM CAN MAKE ITS VISITOR'S DESIRES INTO REALITY.
BUT THESE THOUGHTS ARE...
IT'S JUST A DELUSION.
!
THIS SCENERY... THIS SUNNY DAY...
ISN'T THIS JUST YOUR DELUSION?

I'M NOT MAKING THIS UP...!
STOP! DON'T SAY THAT!
HEY... WHAT FANTASY ARE YOU WISHING FOR?
I'LL GO GET MORE DETAILS FROM KASUGA.
FWOO
...OR TAKE DOWN THIS WALL.
WHICH MEANS WE CAN'T RESOLVE THE DIFFERENT STORIES...
MOST FOLKS HERE DON'T REALIZE IT'S A DELUSION.
KASUGA'S STORY *WAS* CORRECT.

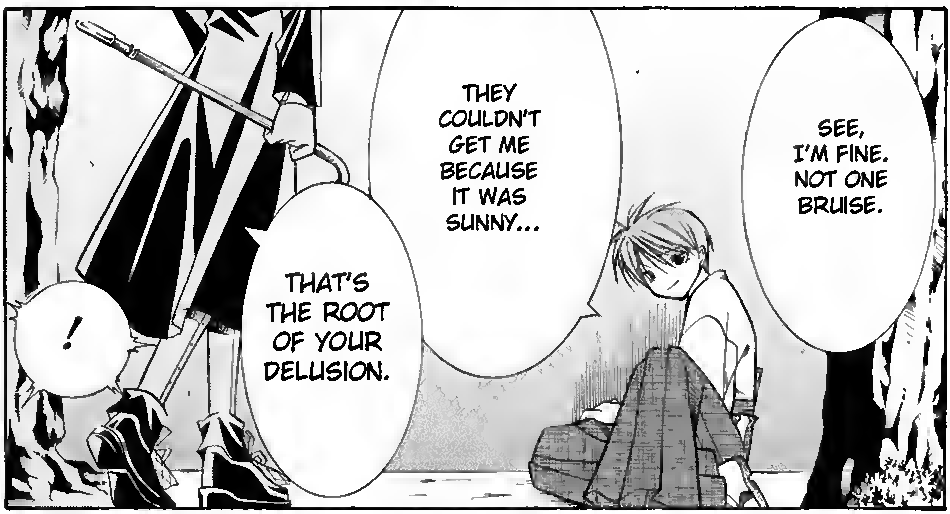
WHAT HAPPENED TO HIYAMA ON THAT RAINY DAY?
WHAT'S THAT?
ZSH ZSH
ZSH
!
ZSH ZSH
HIRUKO, YOU'VE RETURNED.

KASUGA, THIS IS THE SCENE OF THE DAY YOU ELOPED. THEN YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS, RIGHT?
...
TELL ME...
WHAT ELSE HAPPENED THAT DAY?
HIYAMA LOST HIS FOOTING ON THE WET GROUND...
HE WAS CAUGHT BY OUR PURSUERS AND WAS BEATEN TERRIBLY.
WHACK
HOW DARE YOU REPAY THE SAITÔ FAMILY'S GENEROSITY WITH SUCH IMPUDENCE!
WHUMP
GAH
KNOW YOUR PLACE IN THIS WORLD, BOY.

YOU'VE SHAMED OUR FAMILY.
STOP IT...
STOP!
IT WAS YOUR BAD LUCK.
IF MISS KASUGA DOESN'T MARRY INTO THE SAKURA FAMILY. WE'LL ALL BE RUINED.
WHISPER
LISTEN...
YOU SHOULD HAVE SAID A PRAYER.
IF IT HAD BEEN SUNNY YOU MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN AWAY.
FWAP
LIKE THIS!

KASUGA, I NEED YOU TO DO SOMETHING ...
I SEE.
WHERE SHIMA FOUND HIM...
THEY LEFT HIM INJURED IN THE WOODS.

...
DLONK
HUP!


!
THAT'S THE ROOT OF YOUR DELUSION.
THEY COULDN'T GET ME BECAUSE IT WAS SUNNY...
SEE, I'M FINE. NOT ONE BRUISE.

NGH
MISS KASUGA ...
KASUGA
Go back.
UNLESS YOU REALIZE IT, YOU CAN'T SEE KASUGA AGAIN.
THAT DAY, YOU...
AND ACCEPT IT.
REMEMBER, HIYAMA.
SHIF
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH
ZSH
!
THAT'S ...!
HA HA
IT'S WHITE ...
WHITE ...
ZSH

I FEEL WOOZY...

WHAT'S ALL THIS RED STUFF...

IT'S ALL WHITE.

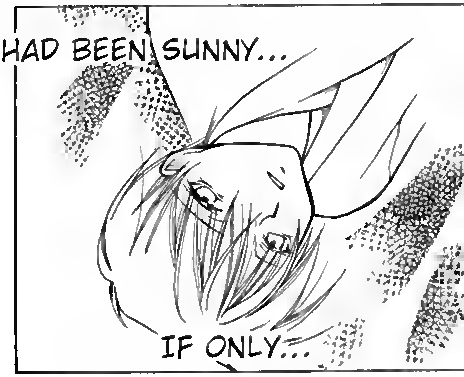
"IF IT HAD BEEN SUNNY YOU MIGHT HAVE GOTTEN AWAY."

IF ONLY?! WHAT AM I SAYING!

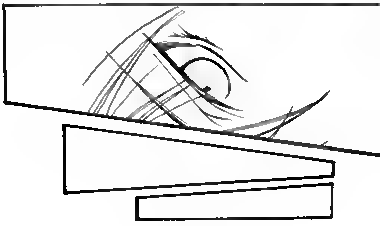
OF COURSE IT WAS SUNNY!

THAT'S WHY...

YES, IF IT HAD BEEN SUNNY...



IF ONLY...

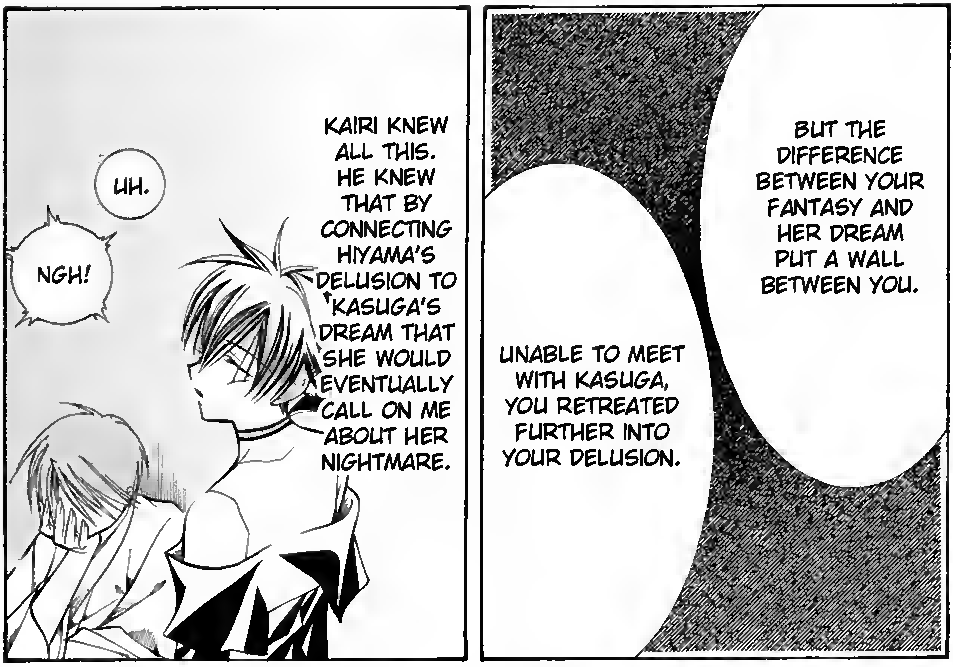


HEH

HEH

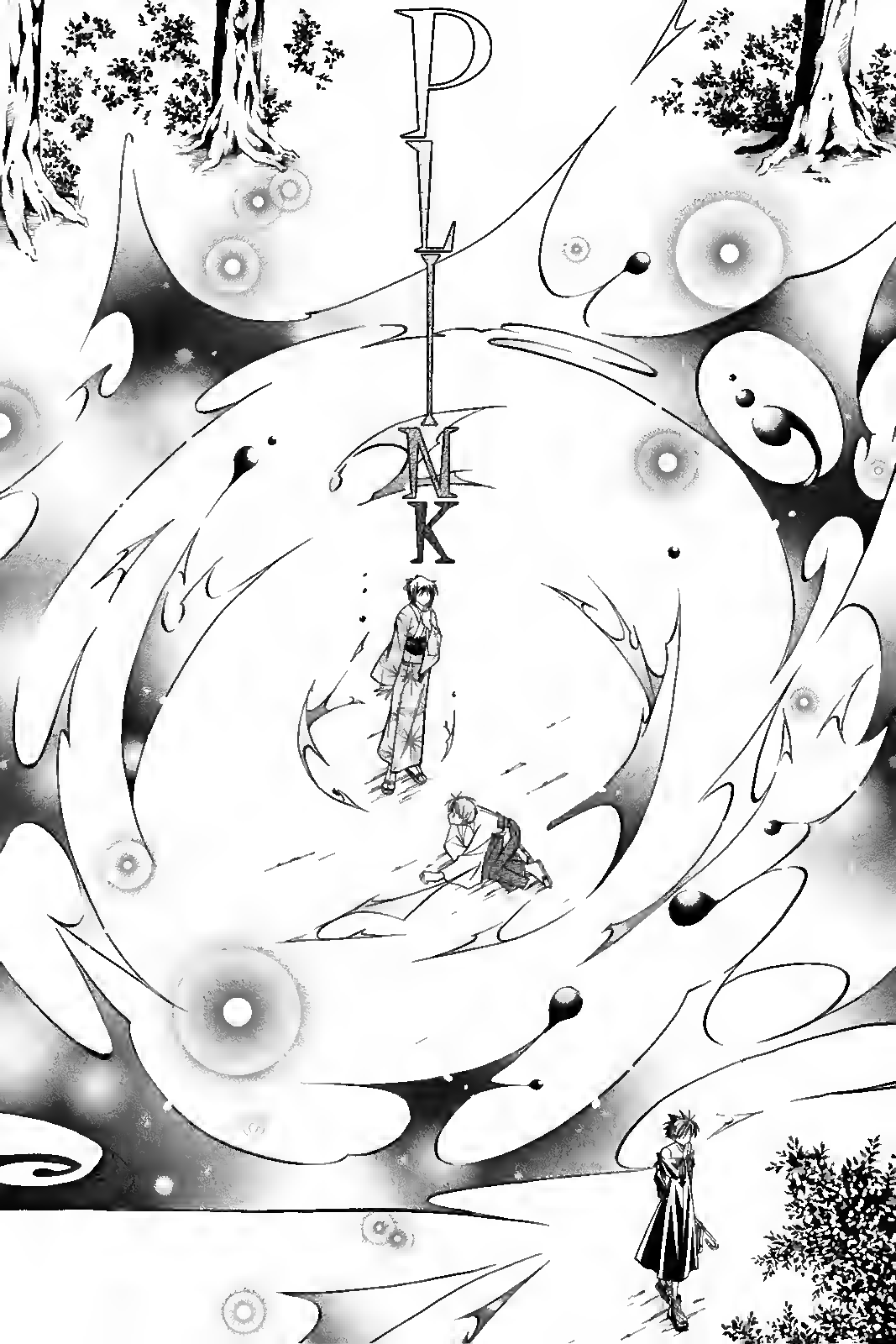
THAT'S WHY I HUNG THIS GIANT CHARM!
LOOK, IT'S SUNNY!
HA HA HA HA HA
NO ONE CAN CATCH ME!
YES.
YES.
IF NOT FOR THAT, I COULD NEVER...

DO YOU GET IT NOW?
YOU CREATED THE FANTASY OF A SUNNY DAY.
I WANTED TO BE WITH MISS KASUGA ...
I WANTED TO BE BY HER SIDE FOREVER..
THAT WAS THE WISH YOU TOOK INTO THE ROOM.
YOU WANTED TO MAKE THAT COME TRUE, KNOWING KASUGA WOULD HAVE ANOTHER RENDEZVOUS DREAM.


KAIRI KNEW ALL THIS. HE KNEW THAT BY CONNECTING HIYAMA'S DELUSION TO KASUGA'S DREAM THAT SHE WOULD EVENTUALLY CALL ON ME ABOUT HER NIGHTMARE.
UH.
NGH!
BUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR FANTASY AND HER DREAM PUT A WALL BETWEEN YOU.
UNABLE TO MEET WITH KASUGA, YOU RETREATED FURTHER INTO YOUR DELUSION.

AAH... RED, IT'S RED!
MY BODY ...!
THERE'S RED LIQUID IN FRONT OF MY EYES!
TWITCH
TWITCH CLUB

THE DELUSION IS FADING.
HOW-EVER ...
...INSTEAD OF IN A DREAM?
COULDN'T HIYAMA HAVE MET HER IN REALITY...
COULD YOU BE ...?
HIYAMA ...
GLUB
GLUB
GLUB

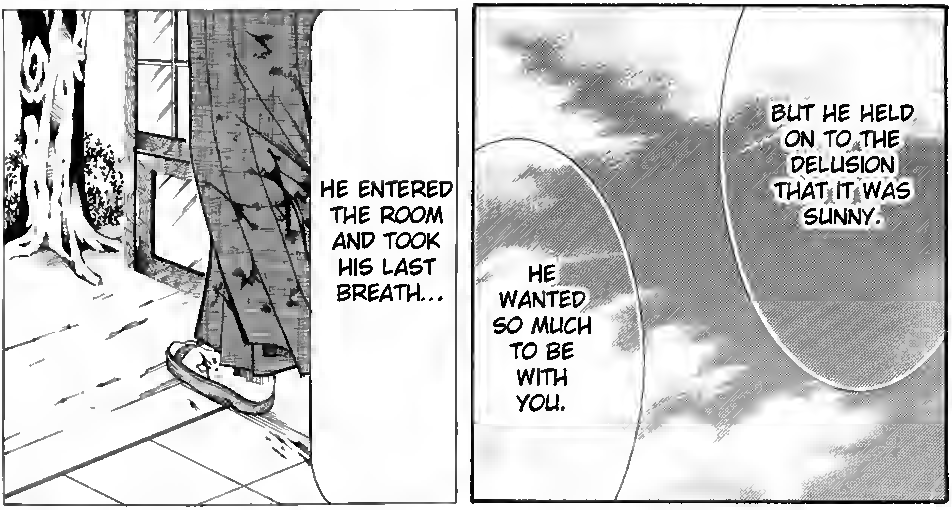

PINK

HI—
HIYAMA.
AT LAST
WE MEET.

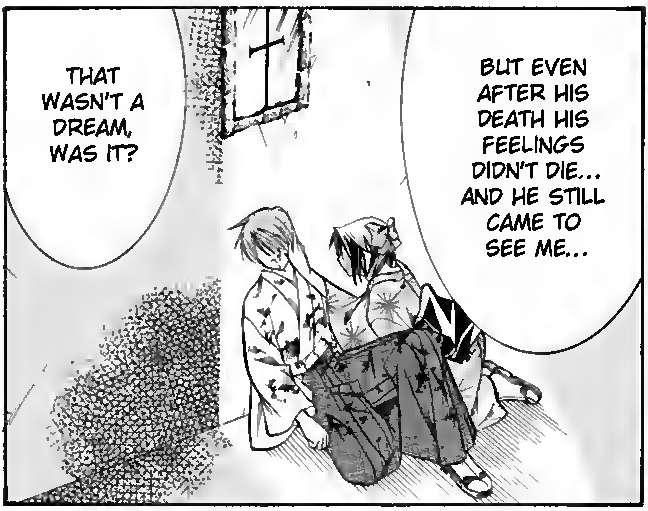
I'M SORRY, MISS KASUGA.
I'VE CAUSED YOU ONLY SORROW...
SQUEEZE
NO.
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN BY MY SIDE.
RIGHT?
HIYAMA ...?

KASUGA
...
THE REAL ROOM HAS REAPPEARED.
THE ILLUSION IS OVER ...

"IF NOT FOR THAT, I COULD NEVER..."
HIYAMA.
SWIP
HE WAS BEATEN SO BADLY THAT HE WAS NEAR DEATH WHEN HE ARRIVED AT THE DELIRIUM.


HE ENTERED THE ROOM AND TOOK HIS LAST BREATH...
BUT HE HELD ON TO THE DELUSION THAT IT WAS SUNNY.
HE WANTED SO MUCH TO BE WITH YOU.

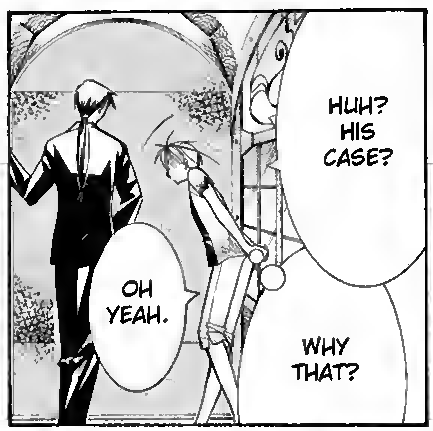
HIYAMA PASSED AWAY, BUT HIS DELUSION STILL CONTINUED ...
BUT HIS FEELINGS REMAINED.

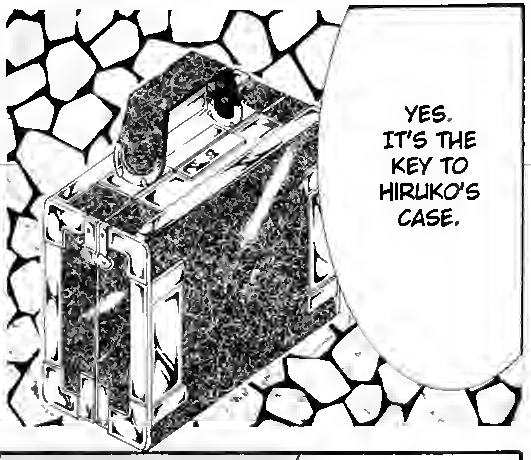


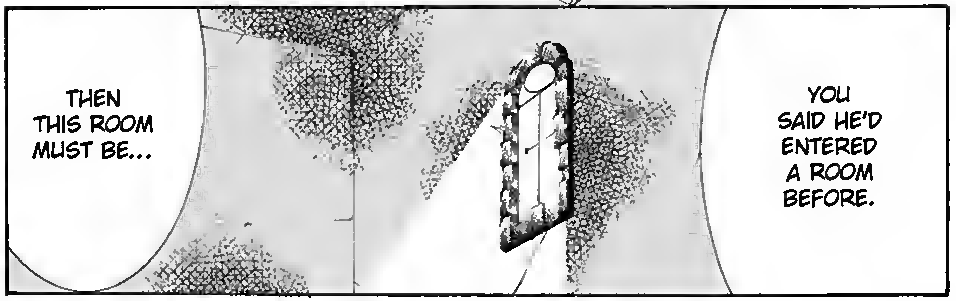
HAVING SEEN HOW BADLY HE WAS BEATEN THAT DAY, I FEARED THE WORST.

OH... THIS.
YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE IT BEHIND AGAIN?
Turn
DON'T TELL ME...

I DON'T APPRECIATE FOREIGN OBJECTS BEING LEFT IN OUR ROOMS.
"AGAIN"?
"FOREIGN OBJECT"?
Something not part of the delusion?


HUH? HIS CASE?
OH YEAH.
WHY THAT?


YES. IT'S THE KEY TO HIRUKO'S CASE.


THEN THIS ROOM MUST BE...
YOU SAID HE'D ENTERED A ROOM BEFORE.

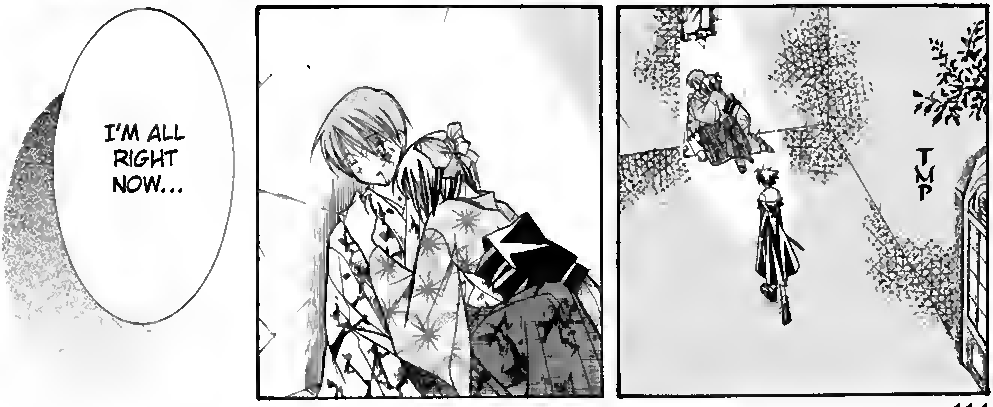
I don't understand!

HAS "HIRUKO" BEEN WELL?

THAT CASE ...
DOESN'T HE WANT TO OPEN IT ANYMORE?
BUT WHY DID HE LEAVE THE KEY?

WELL, SINCE ITS OWNER HAS SHOWN UP, I WAS JUST THINKING THAT HE SHOULD TAKE IT.

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF HIYAMA'S BODY.


I'M ALL RIGHT NOW...
TMP

THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING, HIYAMA...
GOODBYE...
TIME TO WAKE UP.

SO THAT'S WHY YOU HAD YOUR REDEZVOUS DREAM AGAIN...
...EVEN THOUGH YOU SUSPECTED THAT HIYAMA WAS ALREADY DEAD.

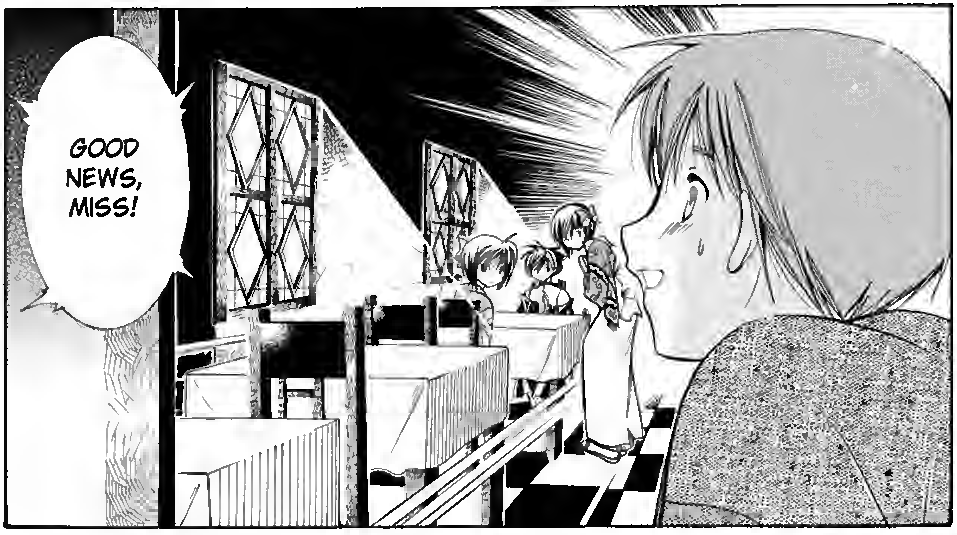
YOU STILL HAD FEELINGS FOR HIM..

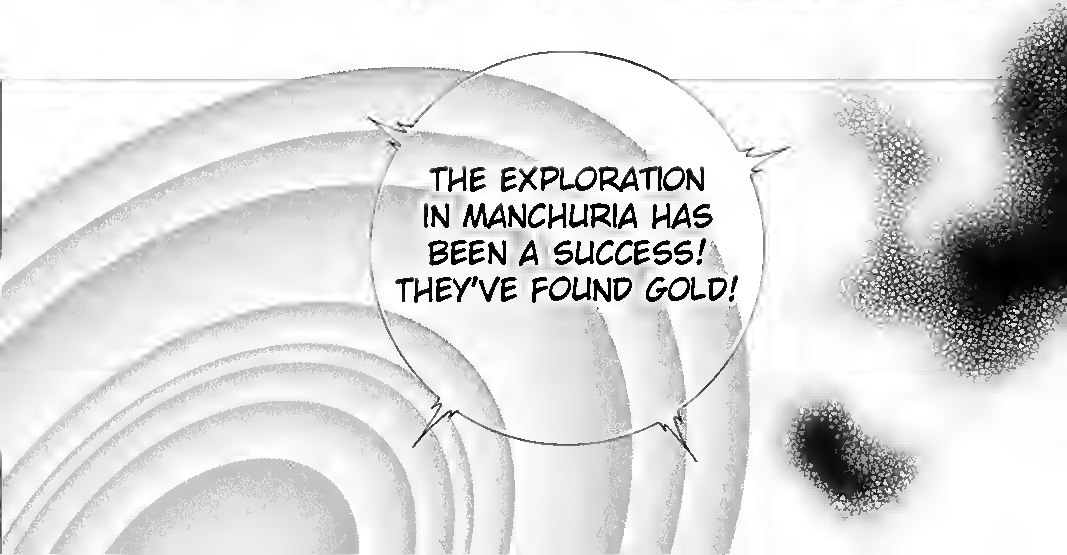
THAT'S ENOUGH FOR ME.

BUT THANKS TO HIM I WAS ABLE TO SAY GOODBYE.

IF ONLY HER FATHER'S MANCHURIAN VENTURE HADN'T FAILED, THEY WOULD STILL BE TOGETHER...
HOW HEART-BREAKING.
MISS KASUGA ...
YOU WERE TRULY LOVED BY A KIND MAN.
YES ...
WHAT WILL YOU DO ABOUT THE BETROTHAL TO THE SAKURA FAMILY?
IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE MY FAMILY FROM RUIN ...
BANG
A.P.

IT'S ONE OF OUR SERVANTS.
OH! WHO'RE YOU?


GOOD NEWS, MISS!


THE EXPLORATION IN MANCHURIA HAS BEEN A SUCCESS! THEY'VE FOUND GOLD!

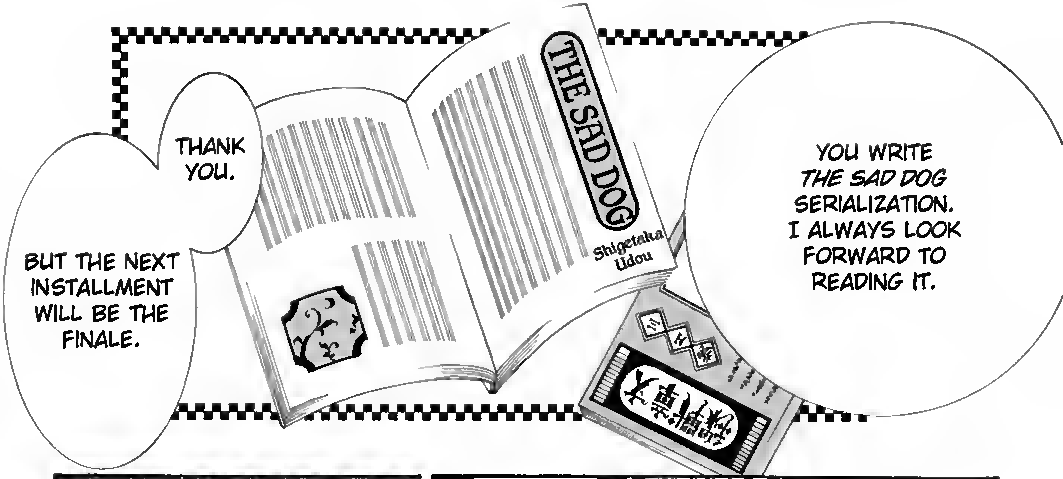
The Eighteenth Night: Writing

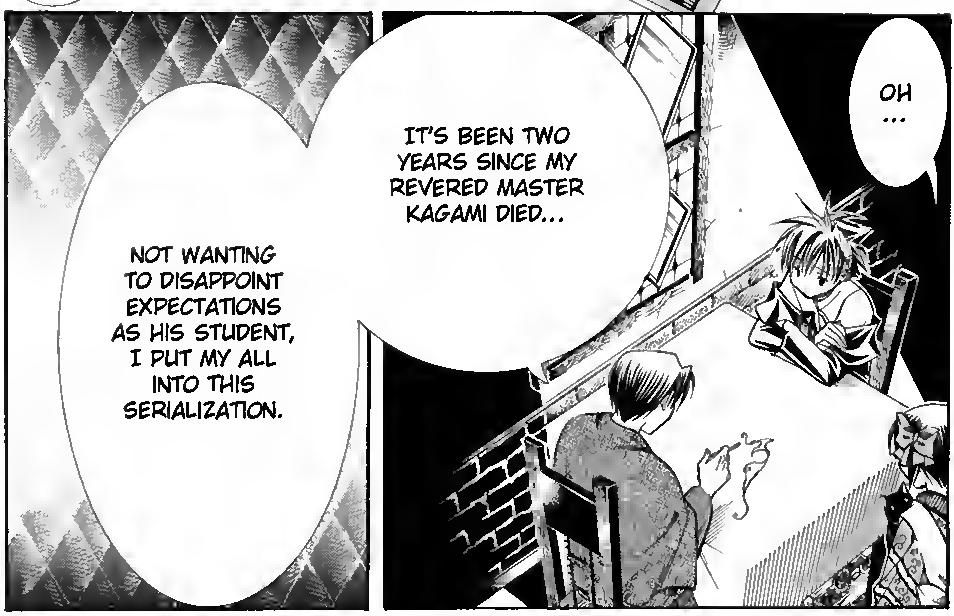
THE END OF THE TAISHO ERA IN JAPAN.
MERCURY LAMPS EXHALE STEAM AND CAST DISTORTED SHADOWS ON THE BRICK BUILDINGS AROUND THEM.
UNDERNEATH IT ALL, SPIDER WEBS CLING TO DUSK, AS CITIZENS ARE BATTERED ABOUT BY AN UNCARING WIND.
ON ONE SMALL CORNER STANDS A SHOP COVERED IN PERPETUAL DARKNESS...
THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE.
THE UNFORTUNATES WHO NEED HELP FACING THEIR DOUBTS AND FEARS COME HERE.
銀星館
喫茶

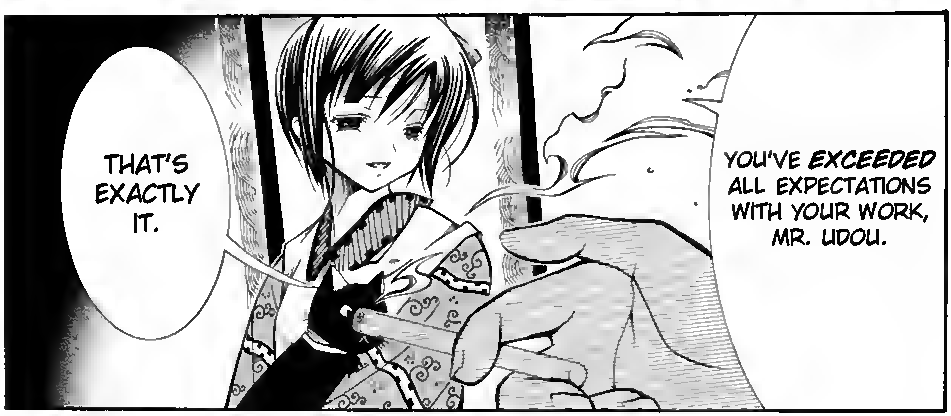
HIS NAME IS HIRUKO.
THEY SEEK AID FROM ONE WHO IS NO LONGER HUMAN.
MEOW~
HE IS THE NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR
HE IS A BAKU HE EATS DREAMS
DING
THE SILVER STAR CLIENTELE IS HIS AND HIS ALONE. HE WALKS WITH THEM IN THEIR DREAMS AND INVESTIGATES THEIR NIGHTMARES.

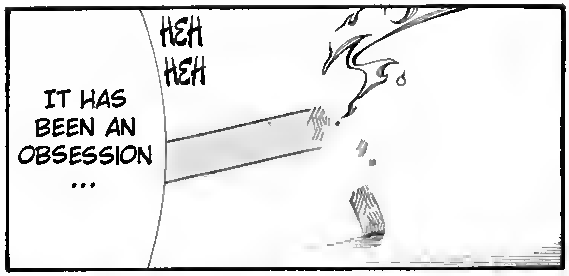
IS THIS IT?
YES. COME IN.
AND YOU ARE?
I'M THE OWNER, MIZUKI ASAHINA. BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO REMEMBER THAT.
WHY IS THAT?
THE SHOP WITH THE BAKU...?
BECAUSE IT'S BEST TO NOT COME BACK FOR SECONDS.
HA HA. I SEE.
CLATTER

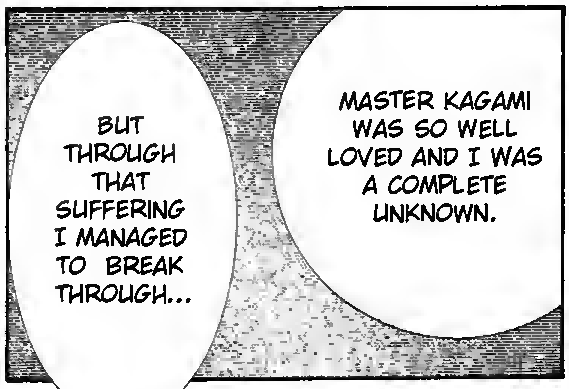
I'VE HEARD THE RUMORS ABOUT YOU, HIRUKO.
THAT YOU ENTER A PERSON'S NIGHTMARE AND RELEASE THEM FROM THEIR SUFFERING...
PERHAPS YOU'VE HEARD OF ME.
HMM?
I SEE.
YES. IN EXCHANGE FOR THE NIGHTMARE.
MY NAME IS SHIGETAKA UDOU.
OH! YOU'RE THE FAMOUS—!


THE SAD DOG
Shigetaka Udou
YOU WRITE THE SAD DOG SERIALIZATION. I ALWAYS LOOK FORWARD TO READING IT.
THANK YOU.
BUT THE NEXT INSTALLMENT WILL BE THE FINALE.


OH ...
IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE MY REVERED MASTER KAGAMI DIED...
NOT WANTING TO DISAPPOINT EXPECTATIONS AS HIS STUDENT, I PUT MY ALL INTO THIS SERIALIZATION.

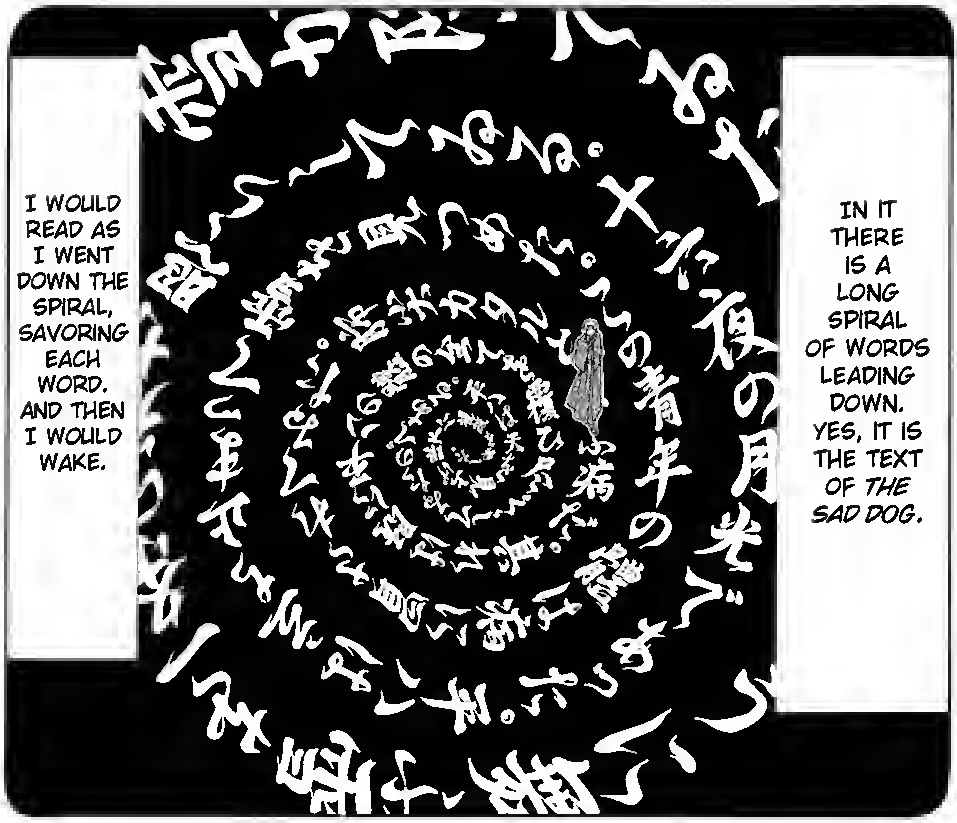

YOU'VE EXCEEDED ALL EXPECTATIONS WITH YOUR WORK, MR. UDOU.
THAT'S EXACTLY IT.


IT HAS BEEN AN OBSESSION ...
HEH HEH

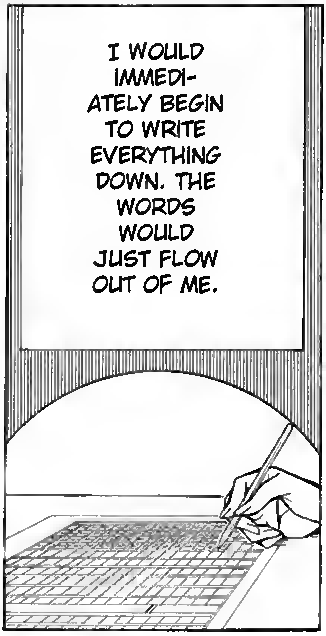

MASTER KAGAMI WAS SO WELL LOVED AND I WAS A COMPLETE UNKNOWN.
BUT THROUGH THAT SUFFERING I MANAGED TO BREAK THROUGH...

AND MY OWN TALENT BLOSSOMED!
THAT IS THE CRUX OF MY DREAM!

I STUDIED MASTER KAGAMI'S WORKS MORE INTENSELY THAN ANYONE ELSE...
AS HIS PUPIL, MY WORK HAD TO HONOR HIS NAME!


IN IT THERE IS A LONG SPIRAL OF WORDS LEADING DOWN. YES, IT IS THE TEXT OF *THE SAD DOG*.
I WOULD READ AS I WENT DOWN THE SPIRAL, SAVORING EACH WORD. AND THEN I WOULD WAKE.

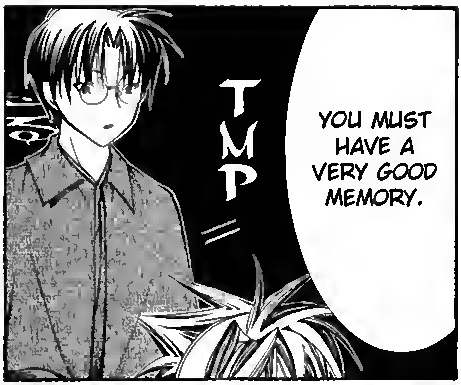
WHO WOULD BELIEVE IT WAS JUST A DREAM?
THAT IS HOW I'VE SPENT THE PAST TWO YEARS.

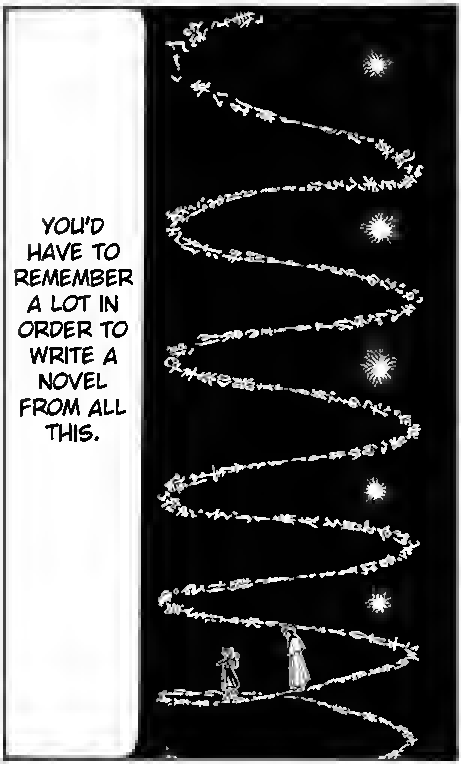

I WOULD IMMEDI-ATELY BEGIN TO WRITE EVERYTHING DOWN. THE WORDS WOULD JUST FLOW OUT OF ME.

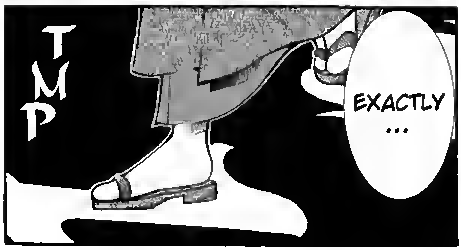
I SEE. IT'S BEEN A GOOD DREAM FOR YOU.
HOWEVER, YOU CAME HERE FOR ADVICE ON A NIGHTMARE?
ALL RIGHT.
CLATTER
A CHANGE...
I WANT YOU TO SEE IT FIRST.
WELL... THERE'S BEEN A CHANGE IN THE DREAM.
WHEN I'M FINISHED, I'LL USE THIS TO TAKE THE NIGHTMARE FROM YOU.
OKAY?
THEN I WILL SEND YOU TO SLEEP.
WOOSH

SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.
HMM.. I FEEL SLEEPY...
Take care.

YES! THIS IS DEFINITELY MY DREAM.


TMP
YOU MUST HAVE A VERY GOOD MEMORY.


YOU'D HAVE TO REMEMBER A LOT IN ORDER TO WRITE A NOVEL FROM ALL THIS.


TMP
EXACTLY ...

AND THIS IS AT THE VERY BOTTOM OF THE SPIRAL...
IN OTHER WORDS, THE END OF THE STORY.

I POURED MY SOUL INTO IT, SACRIFICING MYSELF...
BUT I HAVE WORKED ON THESE PARTS FOR SO LONG THAT I KNOW THEM BY HEART.
YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY UNDER-STAND!
THE FEELING OF GIVING EVERYTHING OF MYSELF FOR THIS SERIALIZATION.
OH, I UNDERSTAND PERFECTLY, MR. UDOU.
...

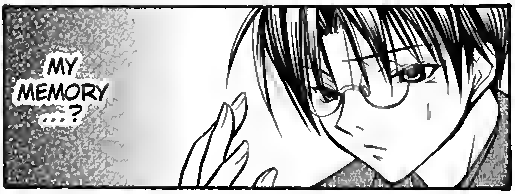
HEH... ARROGANT BOY.
SHLIP
BUT LOOK THERE!
IT'S THE ENDING!
WHERE MY PERFECT DREAM..
...BECOMES A NIGHTMARE!!
THE FINAL TURNS OF THE SPIRAL ...
...ARE TANGLED.

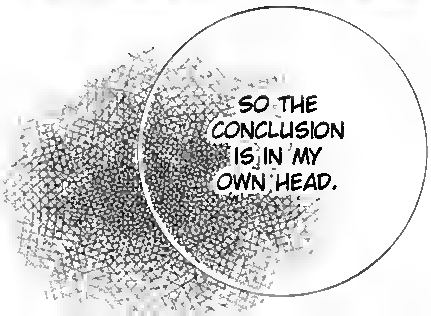
AAH ...
THAT TWO YEARS OF WORK SHOULD END IN SUCH A MESS...
ALL MY WORK UNTIL NOW HAS BEEN FUTILE.
SINCE I CAN'T READ IT, IT CAN NEVER BE FINISHED.
HIRUKO, I BEG YOU...!
UNTANGLE THE MESS IN THIS NIGHTMARE!!
HAVE YOU TRIED TO YOURSELF?
OF COURSE!
BUT MY HANDS SHAKE EVERY TIME I TRY.
AND DON'T YOU KNOW WHY?

HOW CAN THIS BE?!
IT'S BECAUSE MY TALENT HAS BEEN THWARTED.
THE TANGLE HAS UNDER-MINED ALL THE FAITH I HAD IN MYSELF.

I SEE.
YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO PESSIMISTIC.

DREAMS ARE CREATED BY PIECES OF YOUR OWN MEMORY.
IF THE WORDS ARE TANGLED THEN YOUR MEMORIES MUST BE TANGLED.

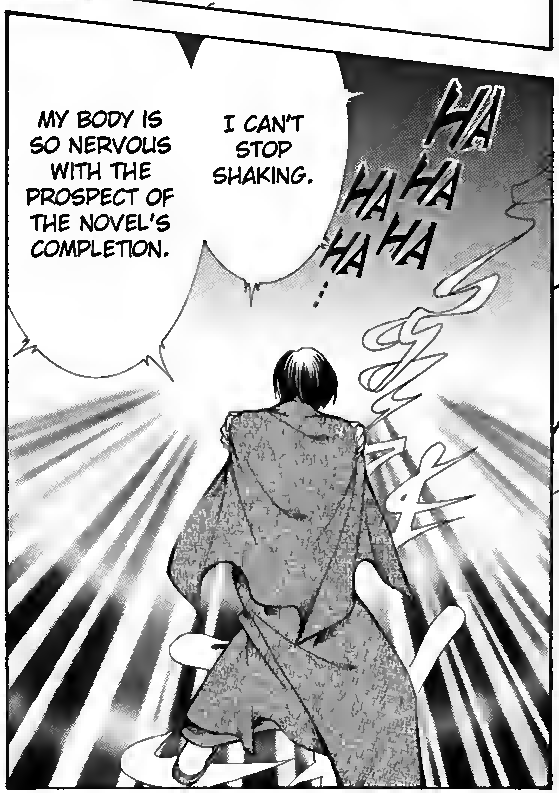

MY MEMORY...?


SO THE CONCLUSION IS IN MY OWN HEAD.

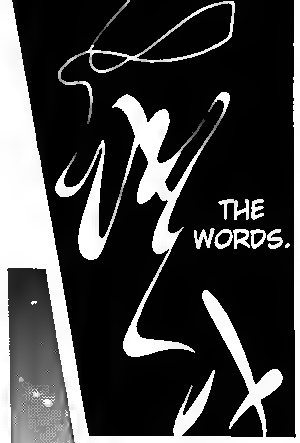
RIGHT... I WAS SO ATTACHED TO THE WRITING IN MY DREAM THAT I FORGOT WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT.
IT WAS HOLDING ME BACK ...
I COULDN'T LET MY OWN ABILITIES FLOW...
I CAN ONLY HELP YOU UNTANGLE IT.
BUT PROMISE ME ONE THING...
THAT ONCE YOU REMEMBER, YOU'LL WRITE A MAGNIFICENT ENDING TO YOUR SERIALIZATION...
TO SATISFY ALL YOUR READERS' EXPECTATIONS!
THANK YOU. I WILL.
LET'S DO IT.

ONLY I CAN BRING BACK MY MEMORIES.
...AND RETURN TO MY NORMAL SELF!

NGH!
FINALLY ...!


MY BODY IS SO NERVOUS WITH THE PROSPECT OF THE NOVEL'S COMPLETION.
I CAN'T STOP SHAKING.
HA HA HA HA HA...

THANK YOU, HIRUKO!


THE WORDS.

MY MEMORIES ...
...ARE TAKING SHAPE...

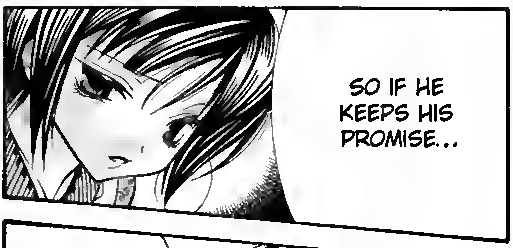
I'LL GO BACK TO SLEEP IN MY OWN ROOM.
I WANT TO READ IT BY MYSELF..
YOU CAN SEE IT WHEN IT'S PUBLISHED.
I LOOK FORWARD TO THE NEXT INSTALLMENT.
FOOSH
TIME TO WAKE UP.

SWOOSH
I CAN'T WAIT TO FIND OUT HOW THE STORY ENDS.
YES, I WONDER HOW HE'LL FEEL AS HE WRITES IT.
HEH HEH, I WONDER IF HE'LL KEEP HIS PROMISE?
TMP
TMP
UH ...
AH.

Another Morph
The one who killed me
AAH ...!
KILLED ...?
ME ...?
BRR
BRR
HOW WAS TONIGHT'S MEAL?

...MASTER KAGAMI?
SAME AS ALWAYS...
YES! WHAT A WONDERFUL PIECE OF WORK!
FLIP
YOU WOULD HAVE CAUSED SUCH A STIR WITH THIS WORK!
FLIP
HEH HEH
SUCH A SWEET MAN...
Who is the one who killed M
BUT IT GAVE ME TIME TO MEMORIZE IT ALL.
IT TOOK A WHILE TO POISON YOU WITHOUT RAISING ANY SUSPICIONS...
FWIK
BUT IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT REALLY... YOU CREATED SOMETHING SO FASCINATING THAT IT DROVE ME TO OBSESSION.
THE SAD DOG... THE STORY THAT YOU WROTE IN SECRET!

I HAVE NO USE FOR THIS ORIGINAL.
ALONG WITH MY MEMORY OF THE FACTS...
THE STORY IS BURIED DEEP IN MY MIND.
AFTERWARDS, MR. UDOU STARTED TO BELIEVE IT WAS HIS OWN WORK.
IT TOOK TWO YEARS FOR THE DREAM TO REVEAL THE TRUTH.
HE REALLY DID POUR HIS SOUL INTO IT, SACRIFICING HIMSELF...
...TO REPRESS HIS MEMORY OF THE TRUTH.



EITHER WAY, HE IS RUINED...

THE
NINETEENTH
NIGHT:
MASKS

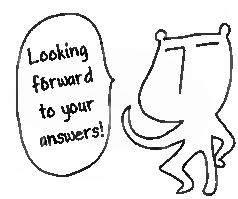
Q6: Hiruko and Mizuki sent a letter to their favorite daily radio show.
For what segment and what prize did they win?
And what name did they use as an alias?

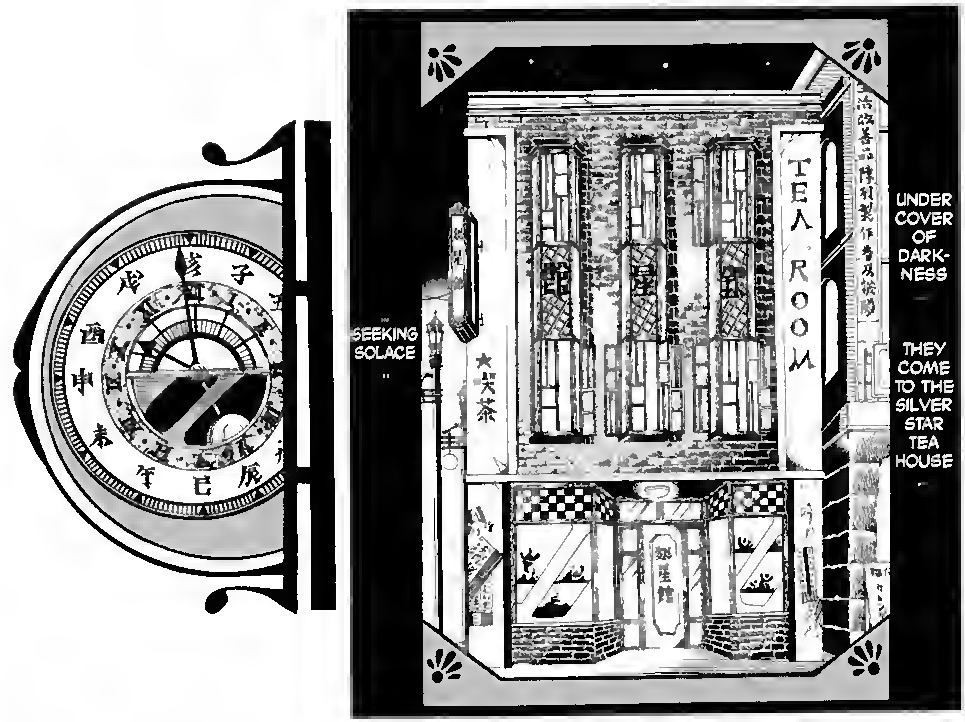
Q7: Mizuki loves ribbons. What amazing thing has she made them out of?

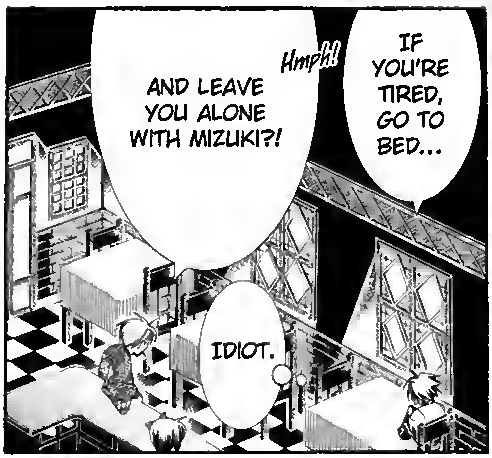
Q8: Hiruko and Mizuki once had a big fight over what they thought of Formalin (the cane) and didn't speak for two months. What does Hiruko think of Formalin?

Q9: When Hifumi comes back from a Friday night out on the town, he reeks of something strange. What is it?

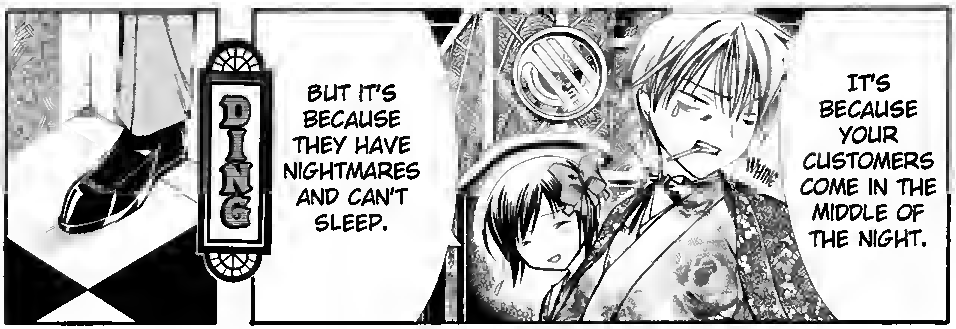
Q10: Hiruko loves soda. He wants to collect soda marbles to conquer the world.
How will he conquer the world with marbles?
How many marbles would he need?




TEA ROOM
UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE
SEEKING SOLACE


IF YOU'RE TIRED, GO TO BED...
Hmph!
AND LEAVE YOU ALONE WITH MIZUKI?!
IDIOT.

YAWN


DING
BUT IT'S BECAUSE THEY HAVE NIGHTMARES AND CAN'T SLEEP.
Whine
IT'S BECAUSE YOUR CUSTOMERS COME IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

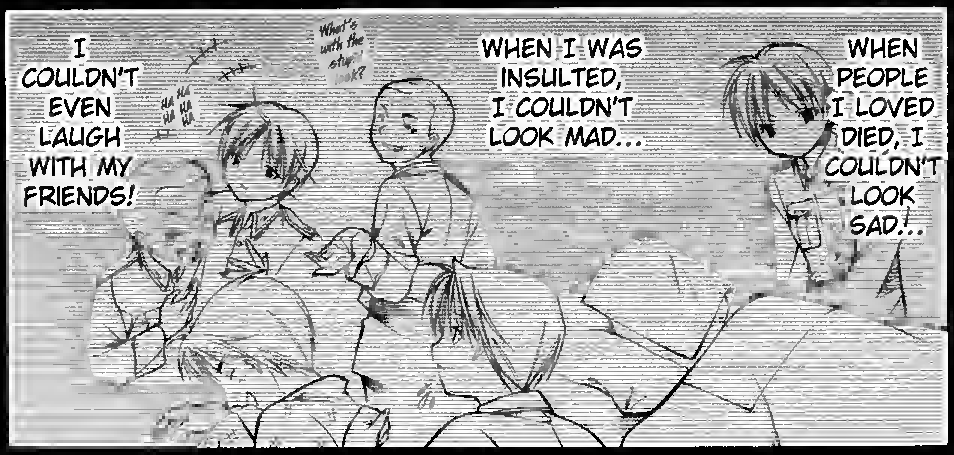
SHORT
SHORT
Come back tomorrow afternoon!
That's mean...
I'M SLEEPY!
GO HOME!!
IS THIS THE SHOP WITH THE BAKU?
ARE YOU HIRUKO?
HA HA HA! YOU'RE EVEN FUNNIER THAN I EXPECTED.
THIS IS HIRUKO.
THAT'S OUR LODGER HIFUMI MISUMI.
WHUP
GRIND
GRIND
HEY! WHO ARE YOU MISTAKING FOR THAT SHRIMP?!

OW!
OH, PARDON! OW OW OW!
?
Hmph!
YOU'RE NOT SORRY! YOU DON'T EVEN LOOK LIKE YOU'RE IN PAIN.
?!
Gulp
YES, THAT'S WHY I'VE COME HERE.
AS YOU CAN SEE, MY EXPRESSION DOESN'T CHANGE...
I CAN'T CHANGE IT!
ALL BECAUSE OF THAT DREAM...
THAT DREAM?
TELL ME ABOUT IT.

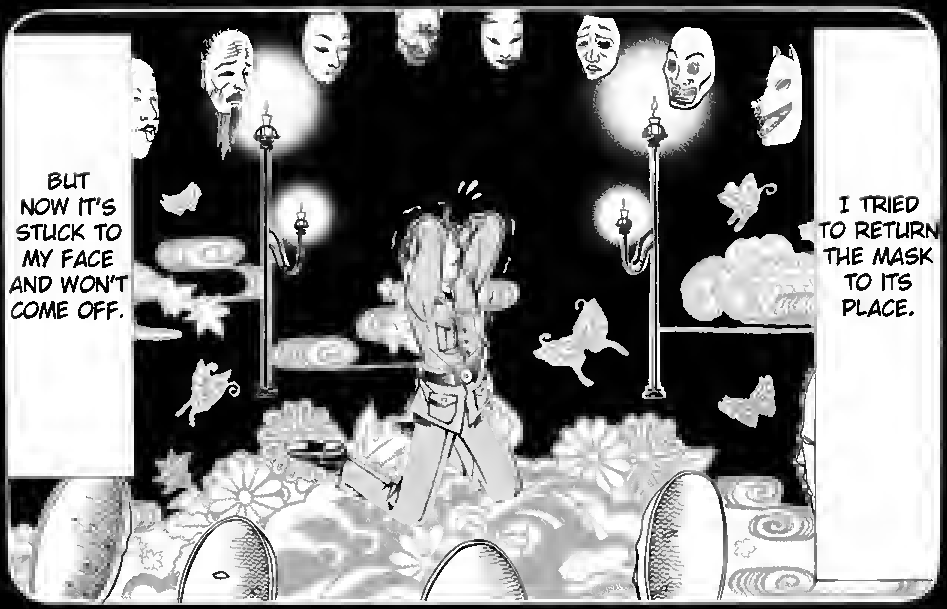
I COME FROM A CLAN OF WARRIORS WHO HAVE BEEN IN THE MILITARY SERVICE FOR OUR COUNTRY SINCE THE MEIJI RESTORATION. MY FATHER RULED WITH AN IRON FIST FROM MY YOUTH.
ACCORDING TO THE DICTATES OF MY FATHER, WHO IS A SOLDIER, I ENROLLED IN A MILITARY ACADEMY.
MY NAME IS YÛICHIRÔ ISOBE.
※MEIJI RESTORATION—A CHAIN OF EVENTS OCCURRING IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY THAT LED TO ENORMOUS CHANGES IN JAPAN'S POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE
AAH!!
I told you to cut your hair!
No! Please stop, father!
BUT I'M A SENSITIVE AND EMOTIONAL PERSON, SO I HAD TROUBLE CONTAINING MY FEELINGS.
MY FATHER SCOLDED ME CONSTANTLY.
SOLDIERS MUST BE CALM AND COLLECTED AT ALL TIMES.
EXPRESSING EMOTIONS WERE FORBIDDEN.
EVERY DAY WAS LIKE THIS UNTIL I HAD THE DREAM.

IT WAS AS IF MY LONGING TO BE STOIC HAD COME TRUE THROUGH THE DREAM AND CAST A SPELL ON ME.

IT WAS A BLESSING IN MANY WAYS.

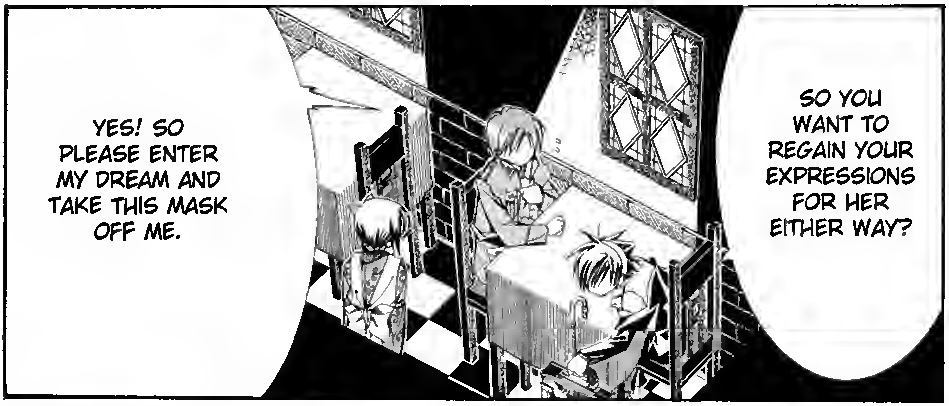

I COULDN'T EVEN LAUGH WITH MY FRIENDS!
What's with the stiff?
WHEN I WAS INSULTED, I COULDN'T LOOK MAD...
WHEN PEOPLE I LOVED DIED, I COULDN'T LOOK SAD...

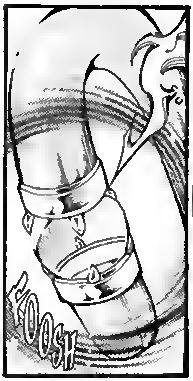
AFTER A WHILE, THE DREAM BECAME A NIGHTMARE.



PERHAPS THE SPELL WAS TOO STRONG AND NOW CAN'T BE UNDONE.
IT'S BEEN YEARS NOW SINCE I'VE BEEN EXPRESSIONLESS.
NOW ALL SHE SAYS IS TO SHOW HER MY SMILING FACE.
WHEN I TOLD HER HOW I FELT, SHE DID NOT CARE FOR MY EMOTIONLESS FACE...
THE WORST PART IS THAT THERE'S A GIRL THAT I'VE LOVED FOR MANY YEARS.
B-BUT ...
YES ...
SCARED TO OPEN IT?
IT'S HER REPLY... BUT...
WHAT'S THAT?

AND IF SHE HAS ACCEPTED ME, I WANT TO COURT HER WITH MY REAL FACE.
IF SHE HAS REJECTED ME, I WANT TO ASK HER AGAIN BUT WITH MY REAL FACE.


YES! SO PLEASE ENTER MY DREAM AND TAKE THIS MASK OFF ME.
SO YOU WANT TO REGAIN YOUR EXPRESSIONS FOR HER EITHER WAY?


FOOSH

ALL RIGHT. I THINK I'VE HEARD MORE THAN ENOUGH ABOUT THIS FACE.

GRIP

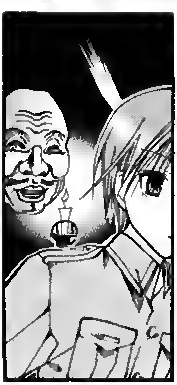
SLEEP NOW... LEAVE THIS WORLD BEHIND.

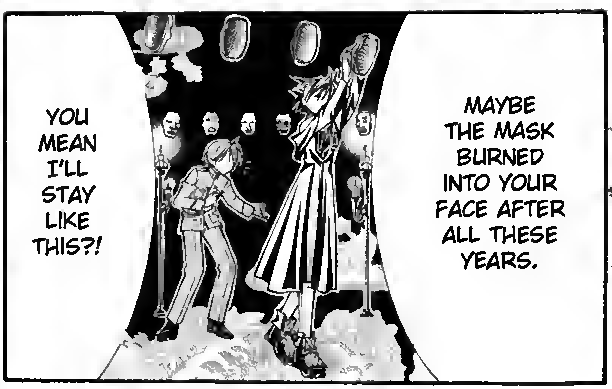
MAYBE YOU CAN REMOVE IT AND RELEASE ME FROM THIS CURSE.
I WANTED TO HIDE BEHIND THIS MASK... BUT NOW I CAN'T TAKE IT OFF.

I CAN FINALLY EXPRESS MYSELF!
IT'S OFF! YOU DID IT!
NO.

FWUP

?!
YOU'RE STILL EXPRESSIONLESS.




YOU MEAN I'LL STAY LIKE THIS?!
MAYBE THE MASK BURNED INTO YOUR FACE AFTER ALL THESE YEARS.

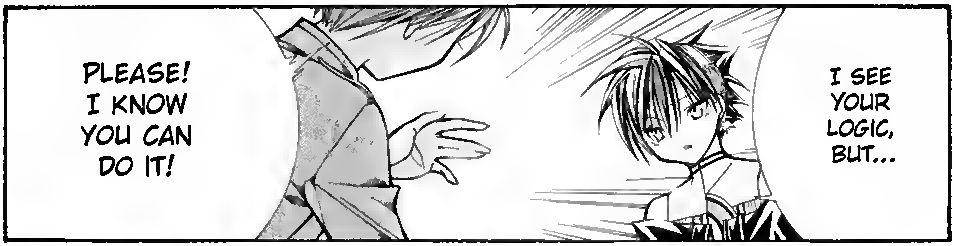
IT CAN'T BE!

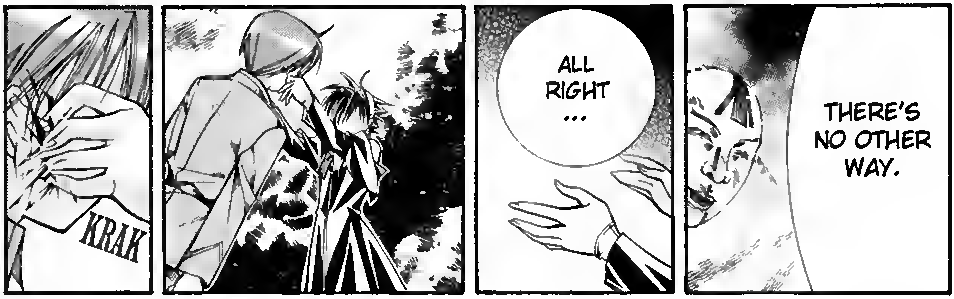
I KNOW!
WHAT IF I PUT ON A LAUGHING MASK...?
...
FWUP
LET'S TRY ANOTHER.
HIRUKO, PLEASE TAKE IT OFF.
FWUP
DOES IT LOOK LIKE I'M LAUGHING?
IT DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT.
NO, THIS ISN'T IT!
IT'S WRONG!
FWUP
WRONG.
FWUP
NO, THIS IS WRONG!

I NEED A WAY TO EXPRESS ALL THE EMOTIONS I FEEL...
IT'S NOT THE MASKS!
I DON'T WANT TO BORROW ANOTHER EXPRESSION FROM A NOH MASK!
I NEED ONE MADE BY MY TRUE FACE.
I HAVE NO USE FOR THESE MASKS ANYMORE.
THAT'S IT!
SO...

PLEASE TAKE OFF MY FACE.

TAKE OFF THIS FROZEN, BLANK FACE JUST LIKE YOU TOOK OFF THE MASK.

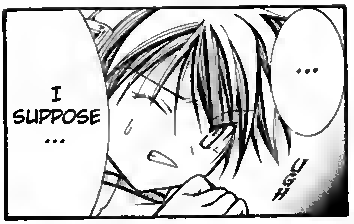

PLEASE! I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT!
I SEE YOUR LOGIC, BUT...


KRAK
ALL RIGHT ...
THERE'S NO OTHER WAY.

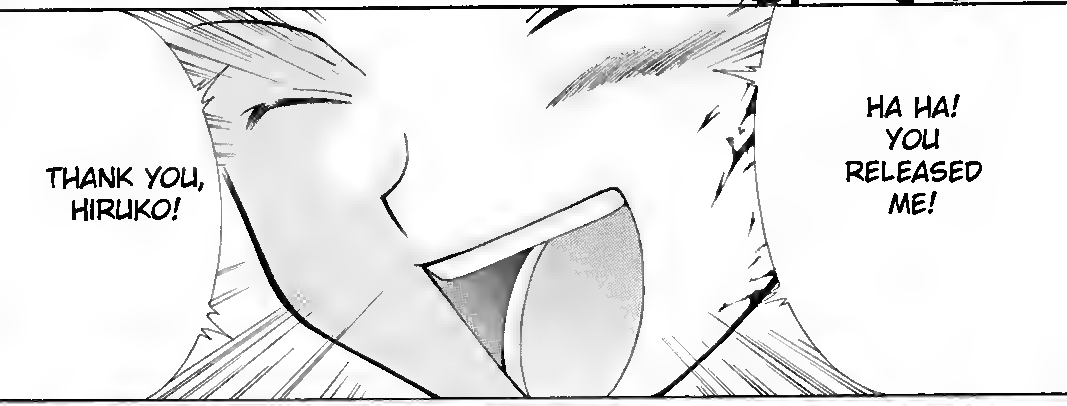
R I P
NOW I CAN FINALLY...!
OH! THANK YOU, HIRUKO!
NO.
THERE'S A FACE UNDER THE FACE.
?!
IT'S STILL EXPRESSION-LESS.

PLEASE! THERE'S NO OTHER WAY!
SHAKE
SHAKE
PLEASE ...!
I SEE. WELL, IT'S BEEN YEARS, SO MAYBE MY REAL FACE IS DEEPER DOWN.
PLEASE TAKE IT OFF AGAIN.
...
!?
AGAIN? I'M BORED.

...


...
I SUPPOSE ...

I'LL DO WHAT YOU SAID, ALL RIGHT?
R.I.P


THANK YOU, HIRUKO!
HA HA! YOU RELEASED ME!

LAUGHING?
ME?
HA HA HA HA HA HA
THIS IS YOUR TRUE EXPRESSION, YÛICHIRÔ.
FINALLY! YOU'RE SMILING.

JOYFUL?
YES, I CAN SEE YOUR JOYFUL EXPRESSION...
THAT'S WHAT I LOOK LIKE WHEN I SMILE?
STRANGE... I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

TAKE IT OFF AGAIN.
THERE MUST BE LOTS OF LAYERS OF BLANK FACES.
SNIP

ARGH! IT DIDN'T WORK! I DON'T GET IT!
OH... THIS IS NO GOOD...
BUT IF WE DIG DEEPER ...
AGAIN, PLEASE!
RIP
AGAIN.
AGAIN.
NO, AGAIN.
AGAIN, PLEASE!

YÛICHIRÔ, THERE AREN'T ANY MORE.
IT'S NO LONGER A PROBLEM OF EXPRESSION.
NO, THIS IS FINE.
I HAD YOU TAKE THEM ALL OFF.
I'M FREE NOW. I'M A BLANK SLATE.
THERE'S NOTHING TO HOLD ME BACK.
GRP
RIGHT?

NOW I CAN LEAVE THESE AND THIS DREAM BEHIND.
TIME TO WAKE UP.

BUT NOW YOU CAN GET THEM BACK ONE BY ONE. YOU'RE FREE.
YOU STILL HAVE NO EXPRESSION ...
RIP
SHUP
WHAT ABOUT THE GIRL YOU LIKE?
YOU DIDN'T EVEN READ IT...!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! ISN'T THAT IMPORTANT?!
?!
GOODBYE.
I'M DONE HERE.
HUH?
CLATTER
DING
WHAT IS IT TO YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU ANGRY ABOUT?

THEY WERE EXPRESSING WHAT HE WAS FEELING... THEY WERE FULL OF EMOTION.
BUT EACH FACE THAT WAS REMOVED EXPRESSED AN EMOTION.
WHEN YÛICHIRÔ'S FACE CAME OFF, HE DIDN'T SMILE...
YES.
HIRUKO ...
What's with him?
...AND LOST ALL OF HIS EMOTIONS.
BUT HE WENT TOO FAR...
I DON'T UNDER-STAND
BUT AFTER SO MANY YEARS HE THOUGHT ALL HE HAD WERE LAYERS OF EXPRES-SIONLESS FACES AND WAS JUST TOO NUMB TO REALIZE IT.
HIFUMI, DON'T READ OTHER PEOPLE'S LETTERS!
SO THAT'S WHY HE EVEN LOST INTEREST IN THE GIRL HE WAS CRAZY ABOUT.
...BUT ALSO EMOTION-LESS.
SO NOW, YÛICHIRÔ IS NOT ONLY EXPRESSION-LESS...
LIKE HIS DREAM, HE CAST ANOTHER SPELL ON HIMSELF.

YÛICHIRÔ, I'VE COME TO REALIZE FROM YOUR VOICE THAT YOU HAVE KIND, SENSITIVE AND EMOTIONAL FEELINGS. AND I WANT TO SPEND MORE TIME WITH YOU...

BUT I'VE BECOME MORE SENSITIVE TO READING THE EMOTIONS IN SOMEONE'S VOICE NOW.

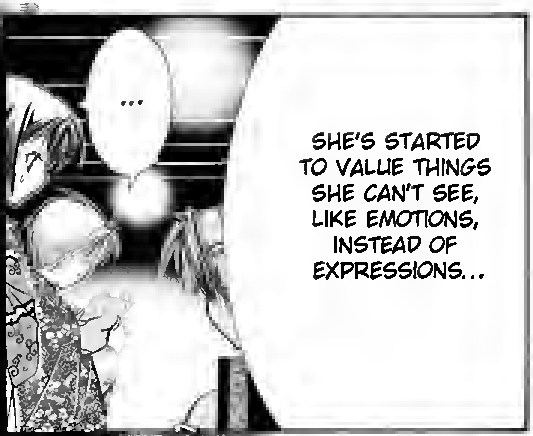
MY EYES ARE DISEASED*. I SEE LESS AND LESS AND WILL EVENTUALLY GO BLIND SOMEDAY...

RECENTLY I NOTICED SOMETHING UNUSUAL.

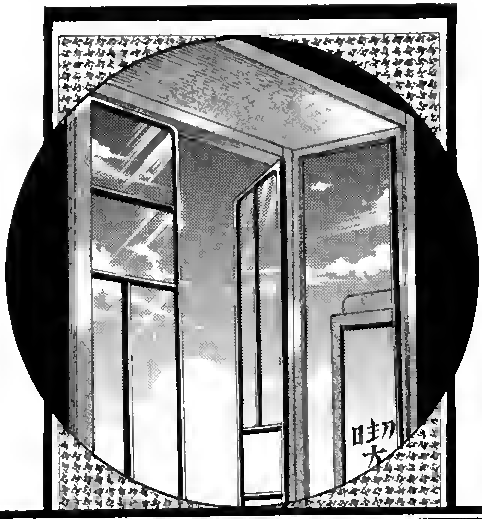
*GLAUCOMA

YÛICHIRÔ NO LONGER HAS THOSE EMOTIONS...

BUT ...



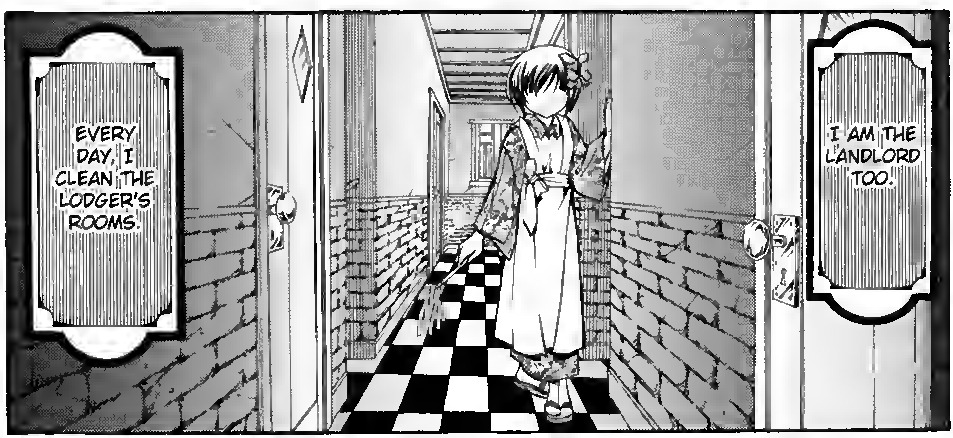
The Nineteenth and a Half Night: Silver Star Tea House

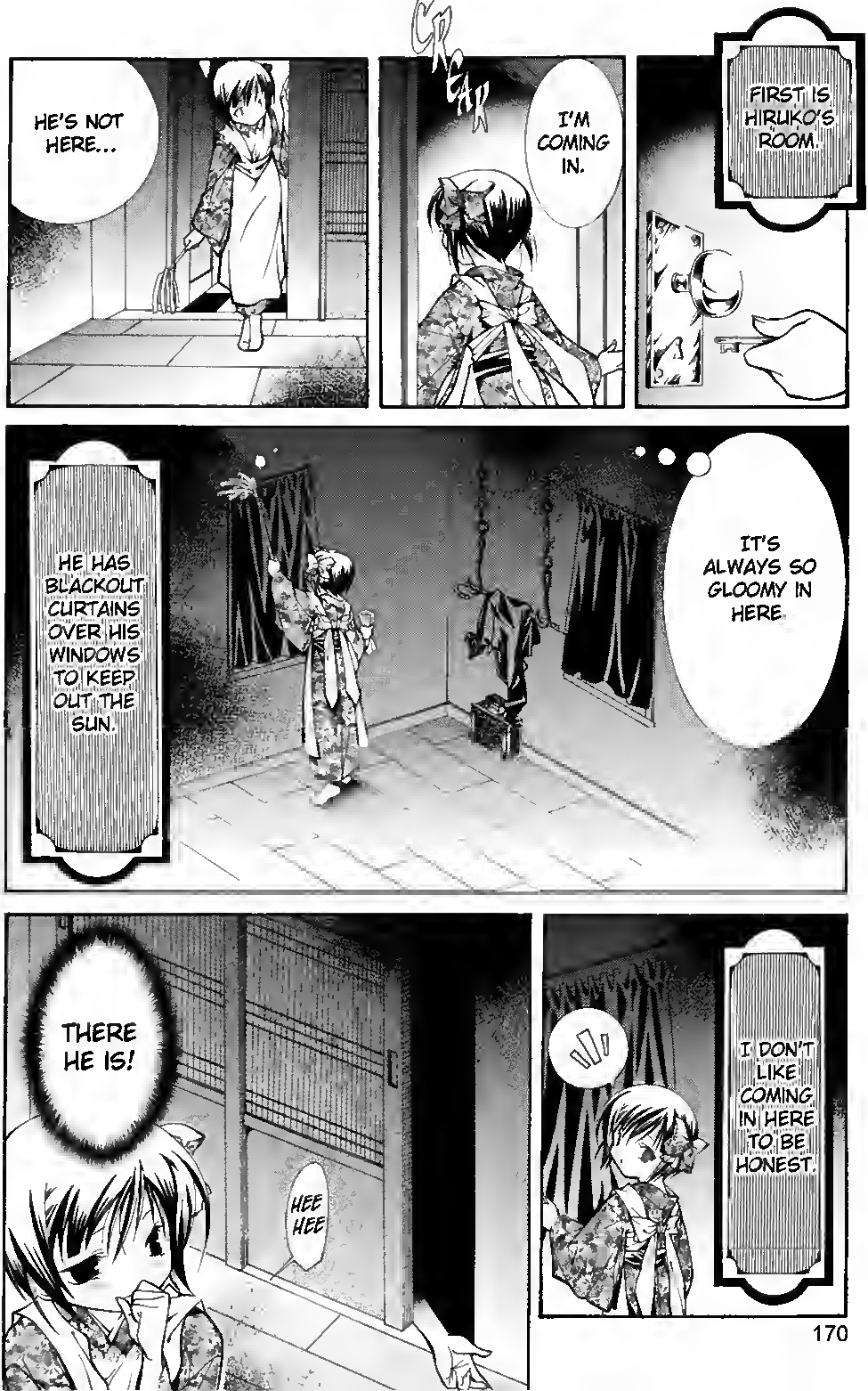


UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS...

SEEKING SOLACE...

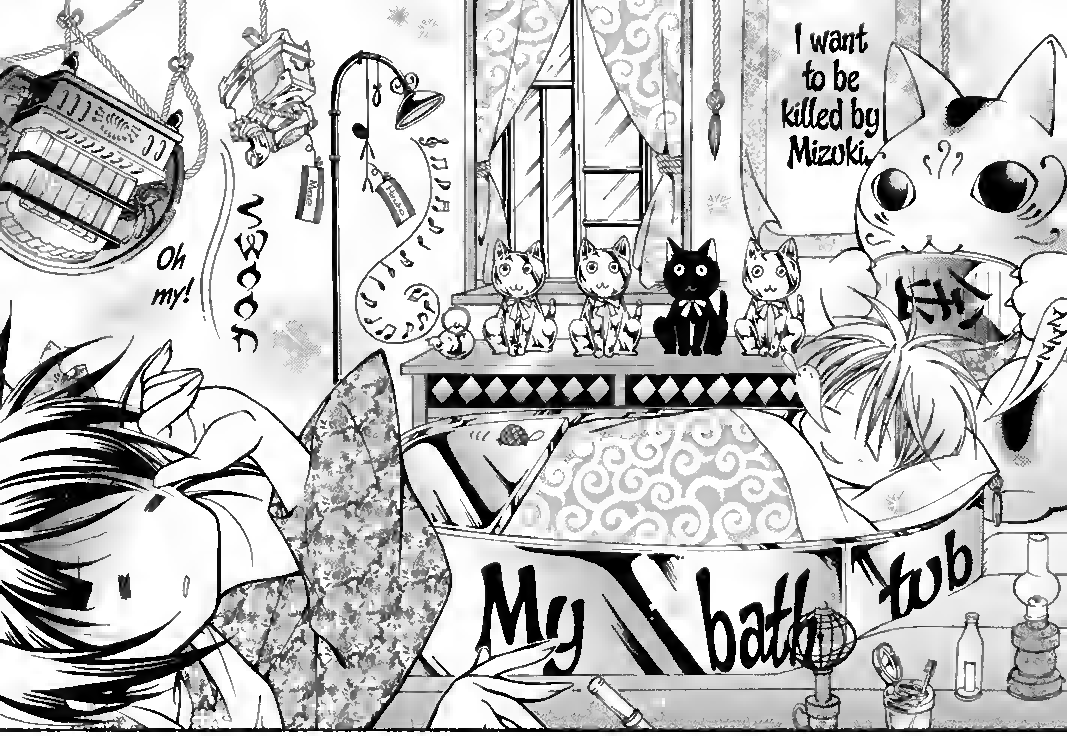
THEY COME TO THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE...




HE'S NOT HERE...
I'M COMING IN.
FIRST IS HIRUKO'S ROOM.
HE HAS BLACKOUT CURTAINS OVER HIS WINDOWS TO KEEP OUT THE SUN.
IT'S ALWAYS SO GLOOMY IN HERE.
THERE HE IS!
HEE HEE
I DON'T LIKE COMING IN HERE TO BE HONEST.

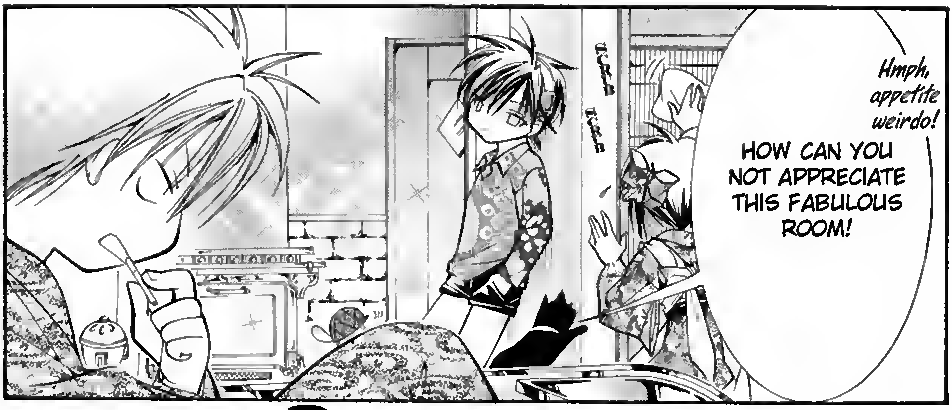
CREAK
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
STOP THAT ...!
SWISH
YOU REALLY HATE THE SUN!
COME OUT. I NEED TO CLEAN IN THERE TOO.
AH HA HA!
TICKLE
TICKLE
HEE HEE!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
SHKK
OH, THAT THING... IT'S JUST AN AVATAR...
HUH?!
HUH!
SLAM
SLAM
ON OCCASION, THINGS LIKE THIS HAPPEN.
THAT'S WHY I DON'T LIKE COMING IN HERE...
SO WHAT IS IT ?!
AN UNUSUAL AVATAR ISN'T MUCH DIFFERENT.
Right?
Don't be okay with it!
WE'VE HAD A WEATHER VANE AND A PILLAR VISIT THE SHOP.

I-I'VE NEVER BEEN INSIDE.
WHY DO I HAVE TO GO?
TUG
AFTER I'VE COLLECTED MYSELF, NEXT IS HIFUMI'S ROOM.
I CAN'T KEEP PUTTING IT OFF!
How to put it...
IT'S A DIFFERENT KIND OF FEAR...
I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY.
HIFUMI
CREAK
...WITH MY BROTHER'S MEMORY BE DESECRATED!
I CAN'T LET THIS PLACE!


I want to be killed by Mizuki.
Oh my!
WOOF
My bath tub

BLINK

AS SEEN BY HIFUMI
SHUT UP, YOU FREAK.
Ick.
YOU'RE AS GLOOMY AS EVER.
Materialistic weirdo.
GO HOME, GO HOME! YOU POISONOUS MUSHROOM!
X HIRUKO
YOU'RE LOOKING AS BEAUTIFUL AS EVER TODAY, MIZUKI.
SPARKLE
SPARKLE
OH, ALLOW ME TO CLEAN UP.
DAZE


Hmph, appetite weirdo!
HOW CAN YOU NOT APPRECIATE THIS FABULOUS ROOM!

I GOT A CUSTOM-MADE ONE, FOR EXTRA COMFORT.
BAM
ZMMM
Mu bath tub
LOOK AT THIS BATHTUB! IT'S MADE OF GOLD!

MY PLACE OF MEMORIES!!
NO!
DOES IT SEEM LIKE THE FIRST FLOOR'S CEILING HAS BEEN SAGGING LATELY?

Not again!
...
WHAT'S THAT, MR. GLOOMY? ONE OF YOUR OWN KIND CALLING YOU? HOW SCARY!
Heaven help us!
YOINK
!!!
BAM
NO! DON'T!
Okay, okay. You can have some purple water... Yes, you can bring your friends..
HEH. THERE ARE MANY MORE THINGS IN THIS SHOP THAT SOMEONE AS LOWLY AS YOU CANNOT FATHOM.
ZMMMMMM
ZMMM
Ha ha! So many of you...
One, two, three...
BAM
ZMMM
DON'T INVITE SOME CREATURE INTO MY SANCTUARY!

I AM MIZUKI ASAHINA, THE OWNER.

THE SILVER STAR TEA HOUSE MAY HAVE SURVIVED THE GREAT EARTHQUAKE... BUT NOT THE DANGER FROM WITHIN.

※THE KANTO EARTHQUAKE OF 1923

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR 3: END

AFTER-WORD

Hello. Shin Mashiba here. Thanks to you we're now up to volume 3. I want to thank from the bottom of my heart my very supportive editor who I've been a mental and physical strain on and all the readers who've followed me this far.

With The Nineteenth Night "Masks," we moved over to a different anthology— G Fantasy. (That's the reason for the different composition, etc.)

I still have a lot to improve upon, but please support me in this endeavour.

✳ To everyone who has helped me.

* My editor Yuki Saeki and my former editor Masataka Matsushita

* My special friends who've helped out: Wan Wan Shiroi, Riru Shirayuki and Nema

* All my kind assistants: Katsumi Arai, Mieke Araki, Mai Tanaka, Mano, MOA!

* All the people at Square Enix.

✳

Special Guest
Wan Wan Shiroi
Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to draw four pages for me. I hope to get you proper pages in the next volume.♥

To my friends who created the writing for The Eighteenth Night (*also continued on the next page), thank you so much for the beautiful writing. You really came to my rescue...

The Sad Dog

It was snowing. The snowflakes, dancing like tiny white butterflies in the night sky, were illuminated by a single shaft of light. It was just after the full moon. Heihachi stood gazing at the snow. His ravaged body, infected with tuberculosis, seemed even less substantial in the cold moonlight. He looked up towards the sky and then lowered his eyes, taking in the waterfall cascading at his feet.

"I'm hardly more than a skeleton as it is," he said. "What should it matter if I throw myself to my death now?"

He heard a voice call out to him.

"Stop!"

Heihachi turned around.

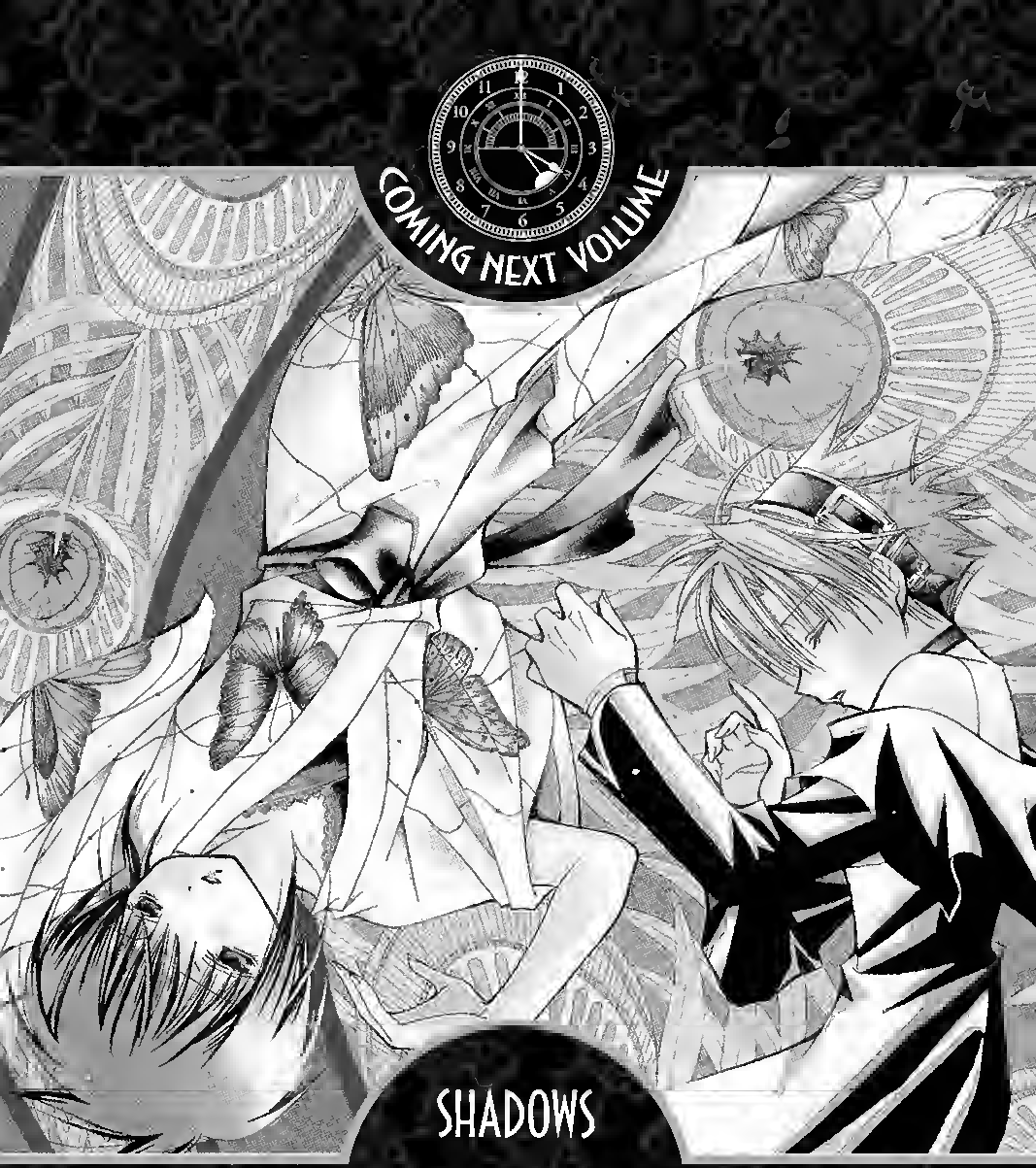
"Don't be so rash! You still have some time left."

Kumagorou, Heihachi's dear friend of many years, came into sight. As a man who was just at the brink of throwing his life away, Heihachi kept his eyes glued to the ground. Finally he looked up and met his friend's gaze. The snow continued its silent drifting. For Heihachi, nothingness was inevitable; the roar of the waterfall merely evidence that he continued to exist. Heihachi's struggle with tuberculosis had taught him the utter meaninglessness of life and death. How could Kumagorou possibly understand what he was going through? Kumagorou might be his closest friend, but this wall between them was simply insurmountable.

The two continued to stare at each other. Tears trailed down Kumagorou's cheeks.

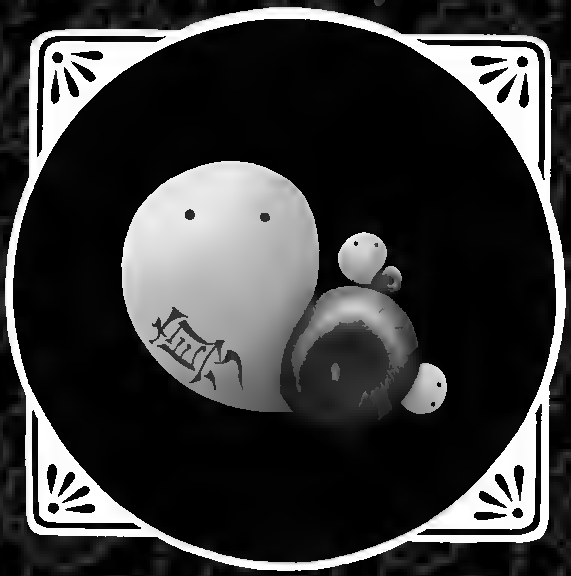
"What is the meaning of life?" he wondered. Everything that is born will eventually die. Those who seek meaning in this world will only find disillusionment and pain. Heihachi had already discovered this truth, the true meaning of existence. It was a contradiction in itself. It was the inevitable.

The snowfall stopped. Silently, Kumagorou turned around and began his trek back the way he came. He finally understood his dear friend.



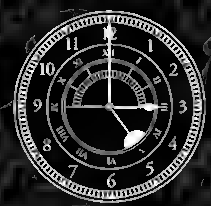
SHADOWS

Dreams on the menu in this volume: a man and a woman trapped on a malevolent streetcar, a mysterious woman with a possible key to Hiruko's past, letters in a bottle that aren't the usual call for help, a young girl who dreams of a miserable future, a boy whose dreams could kill, and a nightmare in which Hiruko himself disappears!



SHIN MASHIBA

Recently I've had a recurring nightmare that I'm being chased.
It's probably about time management...
Can you remember the first dream you ever had?



Shin Mashiba's first manga, *Yumekui Kenbun* (Nightmare Inspector), premiered in *Monthly Stencil*, a shojo magazine, in December 2001 and was then serialized in *Monthly G Fantasy* from 2003 to 2007. Mashiba-san's own nightmares include being forced to eat 50 living slugs.

NIGHTMARE INSPECTOR: YUMEKUI KENBUN ③

Shin Mashiba

Translation: Gemma Collinge

English Adaptation: Kristina Blachere
Touch-up Art & Lettering: James Gaubatz

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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